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Faculty of Arts  
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Doctoral Dissertation

BĪR SHAWĪSH, SMALL OASIS:  
OSTRAKA AND OTHER  
INSCRIBED MATERIAL

MAREK DOSPĚL

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Disertační práce

BÍR ŠAWÍŠ, MALÁ OÁZA:  
OSTRAKA A DALŠÍ  
NÁPISOVÝ MATERIÁL

MAREK DOSPĚL

Studijní program: Historické vědy

Studijní obor: Egyptologie

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KVĚTEN 2015



I hereby declare on my word of honor that I personally prepared the present academic work and carried out myself the activities directly involved with it. I also declare that I have used no resources but those listed in Bibliography or referenced throughout the text. This work or any part thereof had not been used to earn any other university degree.

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Marek Dospěl  
Prague, 15 May 2015



## **ABSTRACT**

The present dissertation is primarily a publication of a group of primary sources. These sources come from the recent archaeological exploration by Charles University in Prague of the site of Bīr Shawīsh in the Baḥrīya Oasis (“Small Oasis” in Classical Antiquity) in Egypt’s Western Desert and consist of inscribed material written in Hellenistic Greek or *koinē*. Their majority belongs in the family of documentary texts, while a smaller group consists of informal inscriptions. Both texts and inscriptions are written or incised on fired potter’s clay supports and can be dated to around 400 CE.

The core of this dissertation consists of an annotated edition of these texts and inscriptions (Chapter 3), immediately followed by a synthetic and interpretative Chapter 4 in which the cardinal issues inherent to the published material are treated in detail. An important part of the edition are the analytical indices and appendices. Chapter 1 serves as a general introduction to the work; Chapter 2 presents the historical and archaeological context of the edited inscribed material. The dissertation ends with Reference Bibliography and Plates of individual text-bearing artifacts.

This work is the first comprehensive treatment of a group of sources from the recent Czech excavations at Bīr Shawīsh; it contributes substantially to the documentation so far available from the Western Desert in general and the Small Oasis in particular, as the newly published inscribed material doubles the number of texts from the Small Oasis published to date. As is apparent in Chapter 4, the new corpus contributes to the interpretations of the economic, administrative and social history of late antique Egypt, while challenging some earlier interpretations and posing new questions or opening different perspectives for future research.

## **KEY WORDS**

Late Antique Egypt; Western Desert; Baḥrīya; Small Oasis; Bīr Shawīsh; Documentary Papyrology; Texts; Inscriptions; Ostraka; Greek; Coptic; Ancient Economy; Edition; Early Christianity

## ABSTRAKT

Tato práce je v první řadě komentovanou edicí původních písemných pramenů. Řečené prameny pocházejí z archeologických výzkumů Univerzity Karlovy na lokalitě Bír Šawíš v oáze Bahríja (v antice nazývané Malá oáza) v egyptské Západní poušti, jsou psány helénistickou řečtinou neboli *koiné* a svým charakterem patří z valné části do rodiny dokumentárních textů a z menší části mezi neformální nápisy. Texty se dochovaly napsané na keramických střepech (*ostraka*) a jsou psány perem a inkoustem; nápisy jsou psány perem (*dipinti*) nebo vyryty ostrým nástrojem (*graffiti*); obojí lze datovat kolem r. 400 po Kr.

Edice tohoto textového a nápisového materiálu tvoří jádro disertace (Kapitola 3), na které navazuje interpretační syntetická Kapitola 4, kde jsou pojednána nejdůležitější témata související s publikovaným materiálem. Důležitou součástí edice jsou analytické rejstříky a přílohy. Jako celkový úvod k práci slouží Kapitola 1; historické a archeologické souvislosti publikovaného materiálu jsou pojednány v Kapitole 2. Práci uzavírá soupis použitých pramenů a literatury, a obrazová příloha.

Tato práce představuje první úplné zpracování jednoho pramenného souboru z českých výzkumů na lokalitě Bír Šawíš. V obecnějším smyslu je významným příspěvkem do souboru historických pramenů ze Západní pouště a v užším smyslu podstatně přispívá do souboru papyrologického materiálu dosud známého z oázy Bahríja, protože tímto svazkem se počet dosud publikovaných textů z Bahríje dvojnásobí. Jak je patrné z Kapitoly 4, tento nový pramenný soubor přispívá k našemu poznání řady otázek z hospodářských, správních i sociálních dějin pozdně starověkého Egypta a zároveň nastoluje nové otázky a otevírá nová témata.

## KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Pozdně starověký Egypt; Západní poušť; Bahríja; Malá oáza; Bír Šawíš; dokumentární papyrologie; texty; nápisy; ostraka; řečtina; koptština; starověké hospodářství; edice; rané křesťanství

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9. Receipt for wheat
10. Receipt for *sitokrithon*
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13. Receipt for chaff
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15. Receipt for oil
16. Receipt for oil
17. Receipt for cotton
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19. Receipt for cotton
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22. Receipt for a piglet
23. Receipt for chicken and eggs
24. Receipt for chicken and eggs
25. Receipt for chicken and eggs
26. Receipt for chicken and eggs
27. Receipt for chicken and eggs

- 28. Receipt for chicken and eggs
- 29. Receipt
- 30. Receipt
- 31. Receipt (?)
- 32. Receipt
- 33. Receipt (?)
- 34. Order for delivery of chaff
- 35. Order for delivery of a piglet, chicken, and eggs
- 36. Order
- 37. Letter (?)
- 38. Uncertain text
- 39. Uncertain text
- 40. Uncertain text
- 41. Uncertain text
- 42. Uncertain text
- 43. Uncertain text
- 44. Uncertain text
- 45. Uncertain text
- 46. Uncertain text
- 47. Uncertain text
- 48. Uncertain text
- 49. Uncertain text
- 50. Uncertain text



## **TABLE OF INSCRIPTIONS (I. BIR SH.)**

- 1.** Notation on a transport amphora
- 2.** Personal names on a wine jar
- 3.** Lamp with the name Apollo
- 4.** Lamp with the name Apollo
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- 7.** Jar lid
- 8.** Jar lid
- 9.** Vessel fragment with the name Apol( )
- 10.** Jug with χυβ

## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not an exaggeration when I say that the work on this project was a life-changing process. It brought me to very new and even unexpected subjects of historical and philological inquiry and made me meet great people including my life partner, while it saw others depart. Along the way, which was far from straight, I met people to whom I owe a lot and wish to express my gratitude in this preface.

I would not have taken interest in the subject were it not for Professor Miroslav Verner who ignited in me – through his relations of current research and a book he lent me<sup>1</sup> – a sheer interest in the deserts of Egypt as a freshman student, just when he had inaugurated the new archaeological project in the Western Desert. I wish to thank him for this awakening and for supporting me in my quest through the years in his capacity of the director of the Czech Institute of Egyptology and the head of the “Egyptology” graduate program at Charles University in Prague.

It was not until 2007, in the last year of my MA studies, that I got actually engaged in the research in the Western Desert. Following the invitation by the then director of the research project in the Western Desert, Professor Miroslav Bárta, I became personally involved with the material, which subsequently became my dissertation project. I wish to thank Professor Bárta that he trusted me with the inscribed material from Bīr Shawīsh and agreed to act as my academic supervisor for this dissertation project. He also made it possible for me to go back to the Oasis in early 2014, so I could revise the texts and take infra-red photographs of the corpus.

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<sup>1</sup> The book was Harry Thurston’s engaging presentation of the DOP exploration in the Great Oasis, *Secrets of the Sands: The Revelations of Egypt’s Everlasting Oasis*, published with Arcade Publishing in 2003.

This volume would not exist without the substantial contribution from Professor Roger S. Bagnall, who received me as a Fulbrighter for a one-year fellowship at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, in 2009/10. Over that period and ever since, he has been to me a constant source of guidance, practical help, inspiration and motivation. I am profoundly indebted to him especially for the nourishing intellectual atmosphere of ISAW and the competent and collegial environment at the archaeological digs at Amheida in spring 2012. He also endowed me with his camera in spring 2014, so I could take infra-red photographs of my material. And finally, I could never do this dissertation without the numerous tutorials over the past five years and his rigorous but also generous reading of my text.

There are other colleagues and friends who merit my thanks. I thank Lenka Suková with whom I had the privilege to co-organize *Bahariya Workshop* in 2008, co-edit a book in 2013, and discuss several aspects of my research, though the subjects were far beyond her own focus. I am grateful to the participants of papyrological seminars hosted by Professor Bagnall for sharing their insights; to Professor Thelma Thomas for having me in her class and providing advice; to Doctors Rodney Ast and Julia Lougovaya for inviting and hosting me in Heidelberg in February to March 2015, which gave a great stimulus to my work and provided access to necessary literature in the final stages of writing. Doctors Květa Smoláriková and Jiří Musil allowed me to join them in Bawīṭī in early 2014 to finish documenting the material.

Several institutions provided funding and services. I wish to express my gratitude to Charles University in Prague for funding my project, which enabled me to access the material in Egypt and to purchase literature. The Fulbright commission sponsored my one-year fellowship at ISAW, which enabled me to seriously engage with the material. I also appreciate the passion and inspiration I extracted from the scholarly community at ISAW. Indispensable in writing my dissertation were the library resources at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, and Institut für Papyrologie, Heidelberg.

Last but not least, I owe my appreciation to the staff of the inspectorate and museum in Bawītī, namely to Dr. Moḥammed Ayādī.

When I turn back, I cannot forget to mention the crucial contribution by my dear friends Magdalena and Martin Pehal, who encouraged me to apply for the Fulbright fellowship and do stand, therefore, at the point from which the whole sequence of fortunate experiences unfolded. When I look further back, I have to honor my parents whose enduring support and trust in my decisions has been providing me with great deal of security in my endeavors. Now looking by my side, I thank joyfully my wife Elizabeth for all her love and understanding.

Finally, I wish to dedicate the present work to the living memory of my grand-mother, who passed away the same morning I was setting off for my life-changing journey.

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<sup>2</sup> Plates numbers correspond to Publication Numbers of ostraka; other inscriptions continue the sequence (from LI to LX); the credits pertain to pictures top to bottom.

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### **Credits**

Photographic documentation used in this volume comes from the digital archives of the Czech Institute of Egyptology. Only initials are presented in captions of the individual authors of the photographs; those are as follows.

JM = Jiří Musil

MB = Miroslav Bárta

MD = Marek Dospěl

MF = Martin Frouz

VB = Vladimír Brůna



# **1. DISSERTATION OVERVIEW**

## **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The present work is the result of my doctoral studies at Charles University in Prague and New York University. It is dedicated to the inscribed material from a late antique settlement at the site of Bīr Shawīsh in the now-barren area of the Small Oasis (called Al-Wāḥat al-Baḥrīya, in Arabic). The edition of these primary sources constitutes the very core of this work (Chapter 3). This inscribed material consists of two major groups of papyrological evidence: documents written on ostraka and informal inscriptions on various supports written in pen or incised with a sharp tool. The texts on ostraka are written in Greek and together with the rest of the inscribed material date to the turn of the fourth century and early fifth century.

When I first learnt about the Western Desert it was in the class of Professor Miroslav Verner during my freshman year in the Egyptology master's program in Prague, probably in late winter 2003. I remember Prof. Verner talking about early history of Egypt and possible roots in the vast wilderness west of the Nile of several aspects of the celebrated civilization in the Valley. His references to Carlo Bergmann made me later acquire Bergmann's book detailing his adventurous explorations in the Western

Desert.<sup>3</sup> It was probably this combination of transgression and uninformed fascination with desert what captured me. But for the moment, other coursework and subjects claimed my attention more acutely.

It had to be for another book, Thurston's vivid presentation of the current research in the Dakhla Oasis, to win me over for the Western Desert.<sup>4</sup> In summer 2005, I wrote a term paper "Christian Sites and Monuments in the Western Desert of Egypt before the Arab Invasion" (in Czech), but did not really know where to go. Another fortunate book intervention struck just on time when I found Roger Bagnall's *Egypt in Late Antiquity*,<sup>5</sup> in the Cairo AUC bookstore, which provided me with the first serious glimpses of late antique Egypt and the field of papyrology; it remains my first reference, as of any student of late antique Egypt. Through this book, the classicist in me received a decisive confirmation of what I was perceiving only tentatively, namely that Late Antiquity is the most fascinating period of ancient Egyptian history. In the same day, I also acquired Fakhry's *Bahriyah and Farafra*, the loveliest and most charming book by any Egyptologist. I ascribe it to these books that I found myself writing this dissertation.

I said I had bought the books in Cairo. Three years into the archaeological research in El-Ḥāyz by a Czech team headed by the Czech Institute of Egyptology, inscribed material turned up at Bīr Shawīsh and I was invited to take part at the 2007 expedition as a Classicist and a person versed in Coptic.<sup>6</sup> Classicist by previous training, indeed, and self-taught Coptacist with no experience in papyrology, I performed fundamental documentation of the material and other duties, including writing a short text about ostraka for the expedition's web-site.

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<sup>3</sup> The book I bought in Vienna in November 2005 is Carlo BERGMANN, *Der letzte Beduine: Meine Karawanen zu den Geheimnissen der Wüste* (the edition published by Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag in 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Harry THURSTON, *Secrets of the Sands: The Revelations of Egypt's Everlasting Oasis*, New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003. It was Prof. Verner who lent me the book.

<sup>5</sup> Bought in Cairo in early June 2007.

<sup>6</sup> The project was directed by Prof. Bárta and financed by his Czech Science Foundation grant.

To be sure, the two books came to my hands at just the right time, precisely when I was deciding my future steps in the graduate program. When Professor Bárta suggested I turn my attempts at the inscribed material into a dissertation, I willingly accepted. My expectations were initially rather naive, as the original title discloses: “Christianization of Egypt’s Western Desert in the Light of New Historical Sources”. I thought I would somehow pick up where I left with my earlier paper on Christian sites and monuments in the Western Desert, using my new material. Such vision also mirrored in my essay published in a collective book presenting to the Czech general public the research in El-Ḥāyz.<sup>7</sup> As I was aware of the limited opportunities to carry out the dissertation project in my country, I looked for external help, which I found in Professor Bagnall, who introduced me to the world of papyrology and has been my mentor ever since my visiting graduate student Fulbright fellowship at ISAW in 2009/10.

My goals for the dissertation have changed considerably thanks to Professor Bagnall’s guidance and the intellectual environment at NYU. I finally came to realize that a corpus of unpublished ostraka had to be the focus of my dissertation in its own right; I also decided to incorporate other kinds of inscribed material and archaeological record.

Since my first encounter with the material in Egypt in May 2007, when also digital color photographs were taken of the entire corpus, I was able to go back in 2009 thanks to funding provided for my grant project by Charles University in order to finish the documentation, retake some photographs, and have a conservator treat deteriorating writing supports or obscured surfaces of others. Finally in 2014, I visited the material one more time as a member of the study mission to the magazines at Bawītī. On that occasion, I took very necessary infra-red pictures of the entire inscribed material.

My vision and goals for this thesis were fundamentally shaped by the experience at ISAW and enriched through co-organizing Bahariya Workshop

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<sup>7</sup> DOSPĚL, Křesťanství a křesťané.

in Prague in 2008 and co-editing a scholarly volume on the recent archaeological exploration of the Baḥrīya Oasis in 2013.

The methods employed in writing the dissertation and its place within the current research are detailed in the following two sub-chapters.

## 1.2. METHODS AND GOALS OF THE WORK

In researching and writing this dissertation, I made use of several sets of evidence and engaged, accordingly, with several disciplines and their methodology.

In terms of text and editorial work, I applied standard philological methods supplemented by papyrological practices and standards in the field; editorial signs and procedure are detailed in “Notes on Editorial Procedure” under 3.0. below. While attentively and critically examining individual text-bearing artifacts, I made use of various tools. Besides the obvious printed lexica and dictionaries, I also profited greatly from utilizing tools now under the rubric of the “digital humanities”; indispensable among them were the search engines, such as the Papyrological Navigator, Trismegistos People, and The Lexicon of Greek Personal Names Online.

The *Papyrological Navigator* (PN) supports searching, browsing, and aggregation of documentary Greek and Latin texts and related materials; it is a full-text database which enables different kinds of search using different criteria. PN is hosted at Papyri.info and aggregates material from the *Advanced Papyrological Information System* (APIS), *Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri* (DDbDP), *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis der griechischen Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens* (HGV), *Bibliographie Papyrologique* (BP). It is particularly priceless for anyone who does not have access to printed editions of texts, and I would not be able to progress in my editorial work without this tool.

The *Trismegistos* (TM) *People* is similarly a portal of papyrological and epigraphical resources, but for personal names and people attested in Egypt; it is not a prosopography yet, but rather a database. It enables to search for names (in any spelling or alphabet, including Greek or Egyptian), for individuals (using standard transliteration of the name) and for attestations of names and people (using the actually attested name).

Together with *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis der griechischen Papyrusurkunden aus Ägypten* (HGV), which is a database of Greek and Latin documentary papyri and ostraka (without texts), these internet resources represent tools and methods not available a mere few decades ago; they give the scholar an opportunity to search through extensive and steadily growing corpora of comparative material.

Another set of technical and digital tools comes with digital imaging of the inscribed material. Photographic documentation of artifacts certainly belongs to ordinary practices, but new technologies brought multispectral and infra-red imaging. The keystone of these methods of imaging lies in the fact that taking a photograph of different wavelengths can give better results for reading texts written in ink but now faded, washed-out, or discolored. The most effective seems to be infra-red spectrum imaging, i.e. at wavelengths around 1000 nm band. The method of infra-red photography is easy to use and can be used in the field.<sup>8</sup>

Other sophisticated imagery technologies include satellite imaging of research areas in high resolution. I made use of pictures freely available through Google Earth. And finally, kite photography provides us with pictures from a camera suspended on a kite. The method is simple, does not involve sophisticated technologies (a pocket camera plus kite), but depends on wind conditions. Pictures in El-Ḥāyz were taken by a team member, Vladimír Brůna during his mission in the oasis in late winter 2012. The color contrast between desert surface and underlying walls was enhanced thanks to substantial rainfall, which made the mud-brick structures come out nicely.

Finally, I also made use of traditional archaeological data. In doing so, I drew on field documentation to some considerable extent; in other respects, I depended on the expertise of others – be it the expert opinion on the group of coins or what has been published on the archaeology of El-Ḥāyz.

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<sup>8</sup> For a practical explanation of the method, see BÜLOW-JACOBSEN, *Infra-Red Photography*; and OATES et al., *Invisible Ink*.

My aim in utilizing different sets of material and different methodologies was to obtain as much data as possible from the material at hand. I strongly believe that only interdisciplinary approach is capable of providing valuable findings and insights.

### 1.3. PLACE OF THE VOLUME WITHIN THE CURRENT RESEARCH

It is a fact that the modern archaeological exploration of the Western Desert started with the pioneering work of Ahmed Fakhry in late 1930s (see more under 2.3.). Although he published several photos of inscribed material in his *Bahria Oasis 2* (Pl. XXVIII, XXIX, LX, and LXI), he did so merely “to show the different types of writing” (ibidem, p. 109). But it was Fakhry’s impulse that made Guy Wagner publish first inscriptions from Baḥrīya in *BIFAO* in 1973 and made him eventually the pioneer of “oasite papyrology”. Indeed, Wagner subsequently engaged in publishing ostraka from the IFAO excavations at Dūsh and ultimately crowned his oasite research with a 1987 book *Les Oasis d’Égypte* where he also edited 55 Greek ostraka that had been excavated in Baḥrīya North by Fakhry.

Since the late 1980s, considerable corpora of papyrological material came down from several sites in the Western Desert, notably from the Great Oasis (Dūsh, Kellis, Trimithis). Baḥrīya yielded more written sources thanks to recent exploration by the Czech expedition, the first texts from the southern part of the Oasis, El-Ḥāyz. Although I have already introduced the corpus in part in several publications, the present volume is the first comprehensive study of the group as a whole. It brings forth a rather small corpus of new historical evidence, but it adds substantially to the late antique material so far available from the Small Oasis and from its southern end in particular. I hope that this material together with my commentaries and enquiries contribute to the exploration of the Western Desert and to the study of late antique Egypt in general.

I have decided to integrate archaeological data into my evaluations of the texts (ostraka). Although not a common practice in the field, such approach is increasingly advocated by scholars involved in current projects, perhaps most notably as demonstrated in the publication of new material from the



Dakhla Oasis appearing in the series DOP Monographs. Archaeological data frames textual sources within the environment to which they belong, while the texts themselves provide information archaeology cannot. The integration of archaeological and textual material thus proves mutually beneficial to our understanding of both sources. To be sure, this would hardly be possible to achieve had the corpus not originated from a controlled excavation.

I further believe that presenting and considering textual sources (documents inscribed on material supports) together with other inscribed material (on various supports) and even with other material evidence enables us to appreciate texts as a specific group of artifacts and documents of material culture. For this reason, I include artifacts with decorative elements alongside inscribed material; I also detail the physical properties of edited inscribed material.

In my ambition to take a more anthropological approach towards the historical sources at hand, I have also decided to develop a separate chapter (Chapter 4) to address issues that merit attention from within the matters treated in the texts, such as agrarian economy, state and local administration, tenant-owner relationship, naming practices, religion, and involvement of the army. In that chapter, I make use of available comparative material from the Oasis and beyond (primarily from the Great Oasis) to analyze and summarize what the texts tell us about the lived realities, social interactions, and culture of the ancient people at Bīr Shawīsh. I also pose more general questions concerning late antique rural society at the edge of the Empire.

With this volume, I am knowingly positioning myself in the new trends within the fields of late antique studies and of papyrology in integrating different kinds of historical evidence to gain a more complex understanding about the issues inherent to texts, artifacts, and archaeological record alike.

#### **1.4. OUTLINE OF THE WORK (ACCORDING TO CHAPTERS)**

The present work was conceived to proceed from general information to more specific, from contextual data to the presentation of specific original source material and, ultimately, to a synthesis thereof.

The work opens with tables of edited inscribed material for immediate orientation of whoever wants to check a specific text or inscription. It is followed by Table of contents and Foreword and Acknowledgements. Introductory matters are also represented by Lists of Tabular and Pictorial Data, which direct the reader to a specific table, figure, or plate within the volume.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the dissertation. It comprises of four short sections where I present an account of my personal engagement with the project and the development of the goals I have pursued; it further introduces the methods and tools I used in researching and writing this work; and finally, I offer my view of where the present work belongs within the current research in the field of papyrology and late antique studies in general.

Chapter 2 provides necessary background information on the archaeology and history of the area from which my material originated. Proceeding from larger context to more specific matters, I first present an introduction to the geographical and historical setting of the Bahrīya Oasis within Egypt; then I descend to the Oasis proper to provide an overview of the sites and human presence in the research area of El-Ḥāyz, asking also more general questions, such as about the end of the occupation of the region in Late Antiquity. The following sub-chapter offers an overview of early Western encounters with the area and the first research initiatives carried out there. Sub-chapter 2.4. finally details the recent exploration of El-Ḥāyz by the mission under the auspices of the Czech Institute of Egyptology. Within this section, I present the scope of the research, individual approaches, challenges, and issues. The final section Chapter 2 focuses on the site of Bīr Shawīsh, from which the

material presented in this work originates. I provide a general overview of the site, its main components and characteristics; my particular attention is then paid to House 3 and its archaeology. And finally, I try to assess chronological frame for the archaeological contexts from which came my inscribed material. In doing so, I look for chronological information in the texts themselves, and for other securely datable material, such as coins. After laying these foundations for a proper understanding of the inscribed material, I move to the very core of my work.

In Chapter 3, I finally present the papyrological and epigraphic material – ostraka and other inscriptions. First necessary technical information is provided on editorial procedure, followed by the assessment of archaeological context of the material. Commented and annotated edition of ostraka according to the standards of the field is next, followed by similarly commented and annotated edition of other inscribed material. This section of my dissertation is by far the bulkiest, presenting unpublished ancient sources.

The last Chapter 4 consists of an analysis and synthesis of selected matters that are inherent to the edited documents and other inscribed material. In this part of my dissertation, I attempt to analyze and synthesize what the inscribed material tells us about various facets of late antique life at the site of what is today called Bīr Shawīsh. It is only natural (because implied by the texts themselves) that I discuss the issues of inner dating of the texts, agricultural commodities and units used to measure those commodities; I also examine what the texts reveal about the state and local administration and management. My particular attention then turns to the onomastics and then to the matters of religion, as it is mirrored in all available archaeological material from the site. The chapter closes with a discussion of the assumed presence in the research area of the Roman army; to this end, I first examine the archaeological records and then any possible traces of the army in our texts.

Titled “Bīr Shawīsh in Late Antiquity” are a few concluding notes, in which I summarize the presented corpus and offer some general observations and suggestions for future research.

Appendices provide concordances between Excavation (or Object) Numbers and Publication Numbers. A separate table presents the archaeological context of the entire corpus, arranged according to the archaeological context (unlike in Chapter 3, where the information is arranged according to Publication Numbers).

Invaluable for good orientation in the volume and indeed mandatory in any publication of papyrological material are Indices, forming a highly informative part of the work.

Plates at the very end of the volume offer the possibility for anyone to check individual ostraka, consider problematic readings and get sense of the material aspects of the texts and inscriptions. The same photographs are provided on the enclosed DVD, which gives anyone a possibility to digitally modify or enlarge individual pictures in high resolution.

## 2. BĪR SHAWĪSH IN THE EL-HĀYZ OASIS

### 2.1. BAḤRĪYA OR THE SMALL OASIS

Baḥrīya Oasis is one of the five major oases situated in the Egyptian Western Desert, which is the eastern part of Sahara known also as the Libyan Desert. The five include – north to south – Sīwa, Baḥrīya, Farafra, Dakhla, and Khārga. Excluded from this number traditionally are the Fayyūm Oasis and Wādī en-Natrūn; even though technically oases, they have always been more immediately connected to the Nile Valley and hence not considered desert oases. The Sīwa Oasis enjoys a special position within the five, as it lies deeper in the Libyan Desert and culturally and historically used to be rather independent from Egypt. The smaller now-deserted oases, such as ‘Arēg or Sitra between Baḥrīya and Sīwa usually go unnoticed.

Baḥrīya Oasis is situated about 250 km south-west of Cairo; it is only 94 km long and 42 km wide, covering the area of about 2.250 km<sup>2</sup>. What makes Baḥrīya an oasis is that it is a depression naturally excavated in the Eocene limestone plateau of the Western Desert. It has oval shape formed by the erosion of a double plunged anticline fold and is – unlike other Western Desert oases – entirely surrounded by escarpments. Baḥrīya is characterized by a large number of isolated hills or *inselbergs* within the depression, especially in the El-Ḥāyz area about 50 km to the south of Bawīṭī. There, in the Black

Desert, the mountains have eroded to coat the desert with a layer of black powder and rocks.

There have been four different models postulated for the origin and genesis of the Baḥrīya depression: 1. wind erosion (during the Pleistocene-Holocene time); 2. tectonic activity; 3. tectonic and wind erosion; 4. multicontrolling factors. This latter hypothesis is based on research by M. M. El-Aref and his team in the ferricrete duricrusts in the Oasis. In a study published in 1991, they were able to conclude that the landforms of the Baḥrīya Oasis and the related surficial duricrusts were formed by multiple cycles of deep weathering involving alternating humid and arid periods and wind erosion; the processes at play included lateritization, etchplanation, karstification, pedimentation, pedogenesis, and diagenesis – in other words, wind, sun and water. However unexpected that may be, fluvial processes involving incision of rivers played important role in forming these desert areas.<sup>9</sup>

On geomorphological and administrative grounds, I apply the name *Baḥrīya Oasis* to the entire depression as defined by the escarpments surrounding the Oasis. In the past, this Oasis was called different names, one of which, in the Graeco-Roman period, was the “Small Oasis” (Μικρὰ Ὠάσις in Greek and *Oasis parva* or *Oasis minor* in Latin sources, literal meaning of the latter being “Lesser Oasis”). Baḥrīya Oasis consists of two major areas with water sources and human occupation history: one located around Bawīṭī/El-Qaṣr (ancient Psōbthis) in the north, the other in the south (see Fig. 1 on the following page). As there are nearly 50 km of desert separating the two areas, they are usually considered separate oases, with a specific name the *El-Hāyẓ Oasis* applied to the southern part of the Baḥrīya Oasis. And it is finally this latter area of the Baḥrīya Oasis where we shall direct our next steps – in the following section and the rest of the work.

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<sup>9</sup> For the full description and argument, see EL-AREF et al., Landform evolution.

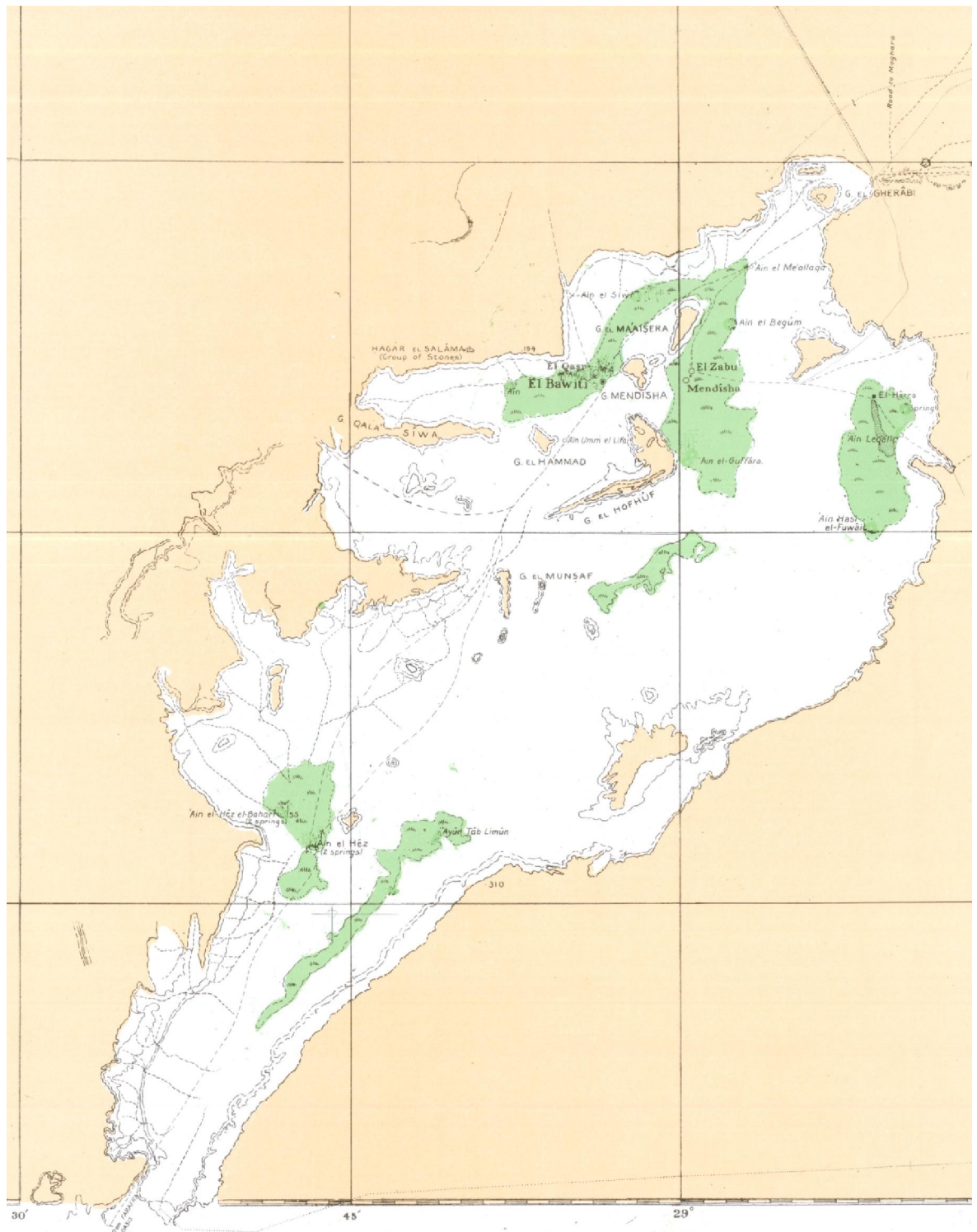


Fig. 1: Map of the Baḥrīya Oasis (1:250,000, Sheet 4-D).

## 2.2. EL-HĀYZ OASIS: THE SITES

There are two occupation areas in the El-Ḥāyz Oasis; they are located in the vicinity of the four principal springs. These areas are El-Ḥāyz concentrated around the springs of ‘Ayn el-‘Izza (or ‘Ayn el-Ḥāyz) and ‘Ayn el-Shaykh (or ‘Ayn el-Ḥāyz el-Bahrī) in the west and El-Rīs around ‘Ayn Rīs and ‘Ayn el-Tabla Amūn in the east (cf. Fig. 2 on the following page).

The first area encompasses the sites of Bīr Shawīsh and Gard el-Shaykh. Bīr Shawīsh will be introduced in more detail further below (under 2.5.). Gard el-Shaykh could be identified with the cemetery with robbed tombs briefly explored by Fakhry near ‘Ayn el-Shaykh in 1945 and roughly dated on the basis of the available material – two heads of painted plaster for a man and a woman – to the first century of our era.<sup>10</sup>

The second area includes the sites of ‘Ayn Gom‘a, El-Rīs, Ṭāhūna, Tabla Amūn, Qaṣr Mas‘ūda, and Bīr ‘Ayn Naga‘. Lying outside and not belonging to either of the two occupation zones are the sites of ‘Ayn el-Khabata, Mannsaf, Umm el-Okhbayn, and Gard ‘Abyad.

As far as both quantity and quality are concerned, Roman- and Byzantine-period material dominates in the evidence gathered in the El-Ḥāyz Oasis up to the present. Despite this focus, however, our present understanding of the occupation of El-Ḥāyz during the stated period appears meagre in comparison with the abundant material evidence at hand and the copious questions and challenges this material brings forth.

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<sup>10</sup> See FAKHRY, *Bahria Oasis* 2, p. 67.



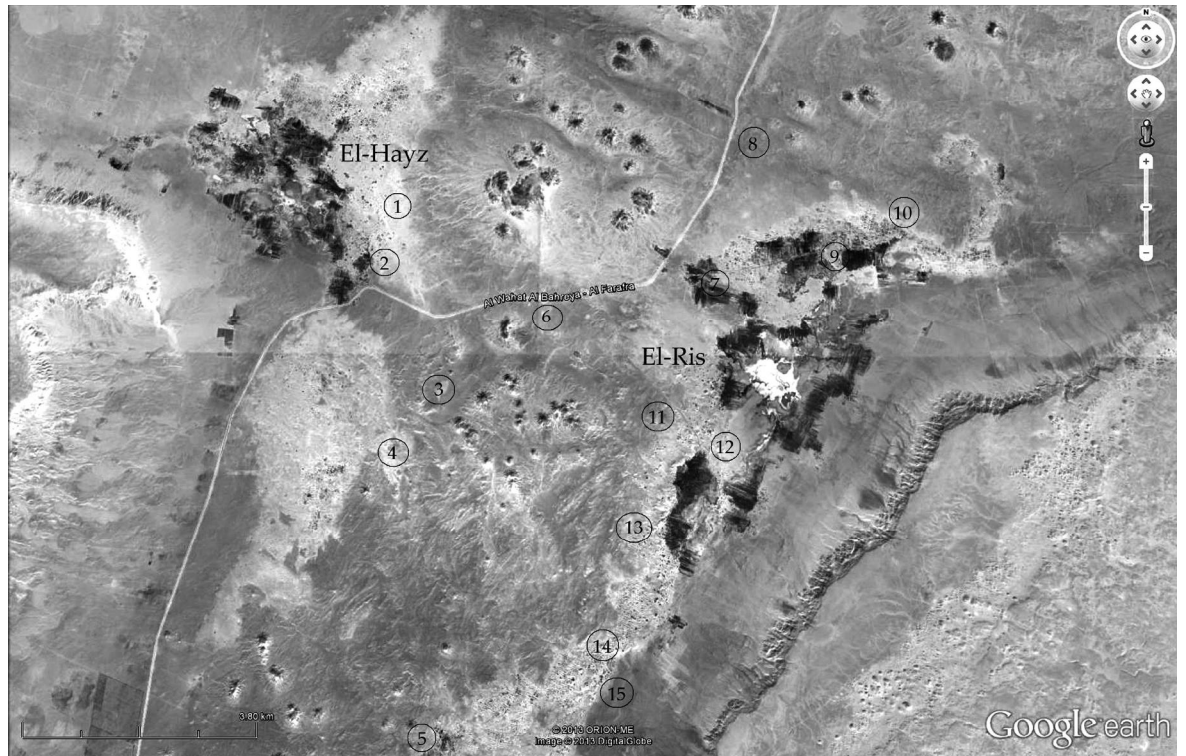


Fig. 2: Main occupation areas of the El-Ḥāyz Oasis, with principal sites and monuments (background: Google Earth, May 2011):

- |                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 – Bīr Shawīsh                | 9 – Tabla Amūn, settlement  |
| 2 – Gard el-Shaykh             | 10 – Tabla Amūn, necropolis |
| 3 – Umm el-Okhbayn, playa      | 11 – El-Rīs                 |
| 4 – Umm el-Okhbayn, necropolis | 12 – Ṭāhūna                 |
| 5 – ‘Ayn el-Khabata            | 13 – Qaṣr Mas‘ūda           |
| 6 – Mannsaf                    | 14 – Bīr ‘Ayn Naga‘         |
| 7 – ‘Ayn el-Goma‘a, settlement | 15 – Gard ‘Abyad            |
| 8 – ‘Ayn el-Goma‘a, necropolis |                             |

Evidence for human presence at individual sites around El-Ḥāyz in different historical eras can be best presented in tabular form. For obvious reasons, it has

been so far possible to assess the chronological frame only in more general terms, hence the terminology employed below. *Prehistoric* is meant to include Early Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, and Epipalaeolithic/Neolithic, *Pharaonic* includes Dynasties 1–30 and Ptolemaic Period, *Roman to Byzantine* cover first through mid-seventh centuries CE, and *Medieval* includes the mid-seventh through fourteenth centuries CE. Bīr Shawīsh and ‘Ayn el-‘Izza are merged here, as they are likely two parts of one larger site.

Table 1 below presents an overview of the evidence of former human occupation and presence in the systematically surveyed areas during four major chronological units, as registered by the Czech mission (the research is detailed under 2.4.). The prehistoric period is well represented at four of the sites, in addition to the peripheral zones surveyed more generally.<sup>11</sup> The Pharaonic period has hitherto been attested only by limited traces of human presence during the Old Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period at Gard ‘Abyad<sup>12</sup> and by a surface find at Tabla Amoun of a New Kingdom sherd of a faience bowl.<sup>13</sup> Up to now, no traces of occupation of the Oasis during the Ptolemaic period have been brought to light. The evidence for the occupation of the Oasis during Roman and Byzantine periods, on the contrary, is most substantially represented at ten sites out of the thirteen localized in the systematically surveyed areas. Last but not least, remains of occupation during the “Middle Ages” have been revealed at three of the systematically surveyed sites.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See SVOBODA, Prehistory (i.e., Chapter 3 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*).

<sup>12</sup> See BÁRTA & BRŮNA, Re-emergence (i.e., Chapter 2 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*).

<sup>13</sup> See BÁRTA et al., Průzkum, p. 172, fig. 26.

<sup>14</sup> For more on this, see TOMÁŠEK, Západní poušť ve středověku, pp. 265–273, and MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, Ausgrabung, pp. 86–87 (i.e. section 5.6 and figs. 5.9 and 5.10 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*).

| <b>Period</b>               | <b>Prehistoric</b> | <b>Pharaonic</b> | <b>Roman/<br/>Byzantine</b> | <b>Medieval</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Area</b>                 |                    |                  |                             |                 |
| ‘Ayn el-Gom‘a               | –                  | –                | +                           | –               |
| ‘Ayn el-Khabata             | –                  | –                | +                           | –               |
| Bīr ‘Ayn Naga‘              | +                  | –                | +                           | –               |
| Bīr Shawīsh / ‘Ayn el-‘Izza | +                  | –                | +                           | –               |
| El-Rīs                      | –                  | –                | +                           | +               |
| Gard ‘Abyad                 | –                  | +                | –                           | –               |
| Gard el-Shaykh              | +                  | –                | +                           | –               |
| Mannsaf                     | +                  | –                | –                           | –               |
| Qaṣr Mas‘ūda                | –                  | –                | +                           | –               |
| Tabla Amūn                  | –                  | +                | –                           | +               |
| Ṭāhūna                      | –                  | –                | +                           | +               |
| Umm el-Okhbayn              | +                  | –                | +                           | –               |

Tab. 1: Presence (+) and absence (–) of evidence of human occupation in the systematically surveyed areas of the El-Hāyz Oasis during four major chronological units: Prehistoric, Pharaonic, Roman to Byzantine, and Medieval. (Compiled from BARTA et al., Průzkum, pp. 149–171; SVOBODA, Prehistorie, pp. 117–132; TOMÁŠEK, Západní poušť ve středověku, pp. 265–273).

Another important point of enquiry in a general assessment of the research area is the character of different activities and purposes, as we can discern from the archaeological evidence at hand. The following table presents the presence or absence at individual sites of six different components.

| <b>Components</b>              | <b>Settle-<br/>ment</b> | <b>Ceme-<br/>tery</b> | <b>Production<br/>activities</b> | <b>Cult<br/>Installation</b> | <b>Military<br/>installation</b> | <b>Qanāts</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Historical sites</b>        |                         |                       |                                  |                              |                                  |               |
| ‘Ayn el-Gom‘a                  | +                       | +                     | –                                | –                            | –                                | –             |
| ‘Ayn el-Khabata                | +                       | +                     | +                                | –                            | –                                | +             |
| Bir ‘Ayn Naga‘                 | +                       | +                     | –                                | –                            | –                                | –             |
| Bīr Shawīsh /<br>‘Ayn el-‘Izza | +                       | +                     | +                                | +                            | –                                | +             |
| El-Rīs                         | +                       | +                     | +                                | +                            | ?                                | +             |
| Gard el-Shaykh                 | –                       | +                     | –                                | –                            | –                                | –             |
| Qaṣr Mas‘ūda                   | +                       | –                     | –                                | –                            | +                                | +             |
| Tabla Amūn                     | +                       | +                     | –                                | –                            | –                                | –             |
| Ṭāhūna                         | +                       | –                     | +                                | –                            | –                                | –             |
| Umm el-Okhbayn                 | –                       | +                     | –                                | –                            | –                                | –             |

Tab. 2: Roman and Byzantine period sites in El-Ḥāyz with the presence (+), absence (–), and uncertain presence (?) of main components.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, I would like to address the issue of ultimate end of human occupation of the area in Late Antiquity. Although the concept of “decline and fall” is not satisfactory as a general model to capture long-term change in Late Antiquity, future research should also address questions of ultimate abandonment in Late Antiquity of most of the sites in El-Ḥāyz, which eventually led to almost zero presence in the research area of anthropic activities during the Ottoman period. As a consequence, western travellers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century still reported that El-Ḥāyz was only thinly occupied,<sup>16</sup> and it was only in the second half of that century that farmers from El-Qaṣr and Bawīṭī in the north intensified their

<sup>15</sup> Prepared by L. Suková for our co-authored essay DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Exploration*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> See BELZONI, *Narrative*, pp. 425–429; CAILLIAUD, *Voyage*, p. 196. Cf. also FAKHRY, *Bahriya Oasis* 2, p. 113.

agricultural activities there and started repopulating the region.<sup>17</sup> These circumstances mean that the historical sites in El-Ḥāyz were not built over and remain largely preserved under the desert surface, leading thus some scholars to make parallels with Pompei.

Looking for possible signs of decline in human occupation and anthropic activities in general is only the first of concerns, however. The careful examination of manifestations of decline might lead to formulating theses about possible causes. Although archaeological works at Bīr Shawīsh, for instance, have been limited so far, they seem to suggest that the settlement was abandoned within a shorter space of time in the first decades of the fifth century. The rich abandonment deposits there, in the same time, do not exhibit any obvious traces of violent destruction and they likely suggest that the people did not leave their homes in a hurry, taking their valuables with them.

One possible factor in abandoning whole areas in a desert region is environmental changes, in particular aridization, which may be a result of climate changes or human action (over-exploitation). Aridization could be characterized by depletion of artesian wells or/and the decrease of rainfall on which the elaborate system of irrigation works (*qanawāt*) depended. It is obvious that failing harvest in several consecutive years can be fatal in agricultural societies; a factor that would more accurately effect arable cultivation, but could make arbori- or horticulture impossible as well. Even though there is no evidence at present for aridization at Bīr Shawīsh in Late Antiquity, it is very likely to have played a role before the abandonment of the site. And we should not fail to consider also moving sand-dunes – a life-threatening process we can observe in the oasis to these days (see Figs. 3 and 4 below).

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<sup>17</sup> I use the term “agriculture” in the broad sense as including all kinds of agricultural activities – not only tilling arable land (*ager*), of which there was and still is very little in Baḥrīya, but also arboriculture and horticulture that are far more characteristic of the Oasis. More on this aspect, see under 4.2.



Fig. 3: Sand-dune gradually burrying the modern village of El-Rīṣ (photo by MB).



Fig. 4: Sand-dune at Bīr Shawīsh, with House 3 in upper left corner (photo by MD).

Another factor we should consider carefully is security threats vis-à-vis nomadic tribes or any invaders from the Libyan Desert. Documentary texts typically do not record the phenomenon, and literary texts are usually concerned with what was happening closer to the center of the Empire. And raids do not necessarily leave tangible traces in archaeological record either, as the invaders may come and go extorting agricultural products by simply threatening the unarmed rural population in the manner that was, in fact, reported by Belzoni to have been a routine still in 1810s in El-Ḥāyz.<sup>18</sup> Such incursions may have motivated the authorities to deploy military units to protect the population, but more often the people were obviously left on their own devices. And they were eventually forced to leave the territory completely, or to seek protection in more easily defendable settings. Despite the insufficient evidence in the sources from El-Ḥāyz, it is generally assumed that there was increasing mobility among the itinerant ethnics (notably Bedouins and Berbers) in Late Antiquity also in the northern part of the Western Desert, and this factor needs to be examined attentively.<sup>19</sup>

Nor should we fail to mention possible outbreaks of lethal epidemics of infectious diseases like smallpox, typhus, measles, and endemic plague that were capable of devastating large populations. To date, admittedly, there is no evidence of anything similar happening in the Western Desert in the early fifth century and the notorious Justinianic pandemic of bubonic plague begun spreading over Egypt no sooner than in 541.

Last but not least, one could think of a shift in uses of agricultural land or tenancy, provided that the rural sites in question were operated by absent landowners. Organization of agrarian production can also be associated with possible mismanagement or an authority crisis, specifically in respect to maintaining the elaborate system of irrigation works on which the farmers depended.

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<sup>18</sup> BELZONI, *Narrative*, pp. 426 & 428.

<sup>19</sup> On Berber migrations around 410 CE, see ISAAC, *Limits*, p. 76.

Whichever of the factors was a reality or more powerful, future research should attempt at mapping the process of abandonment at individual sites and examine shifts in occupation and activities at different sites around the same Oasis. An answer to the basic question concerning Bīr Shawīsh “where did the people go?” may perhaps be explained by continuing occupation of El-Rīs with its “Fortress”. Last but not least, we should further investigate whether there were events happening at the same time in diverse regions that could be responsible for the seeming similarities in the abandonment of different sites across the Western Desert around the turn of the fourth century CE. Following these developments on a larger area may offer more general insight into the occupation patterns of the Western Desert.



### 2.3. PRE-1990S EXPLORATION OF EL-ḤĀYZ (TRAVELLERS AND EARLY SCHOLARS)<sup>20</sup>

The pre-1990s exploration of the El-Ḥāyz Oasis is dominated by the figure of the Egyptian archaeologist Ahmed Fakhry (1905–1973) to the degree that it cannot be overstated how much the current research in the Egyptian Western Desert oases owes to his efforts and pioneering work. It is not an exaggeration to assert that Fakhry discovered the Baḥrīya Oasis for Egyptology.

Before Fakhry, the antiquities of Baḥrīya were cursorily mentioned in the accounts published by early modern travellers and scholars.<sup>21</sup> The prominent among the early travelers to El-Ḥāyz are the figures of Giovanni Belzoni, who inspected the region on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1819,<sup>22</sup> and Frédéric Cailliaud of Nantes, who followed Belzoni on February 11 and 12, 1820.<sup>23</sup> In the same time, the Baḥrīya Oasis was visited by a rich Englishman Mr. Hyde, who made an impressive travels through Syria, Egypt and Nubia reaching Baḥrīya Oasis on Feb 4<sup>th</sup> 1820. There he met with Cailliaud but left on the 6<sup>th</sup> probably never having visited El-Ḥāyz.<sup>24</sup> The first and only trained scholar to ever engage in archaeological exploration of a kind in the Oasis before Fakhry seems to have been G. Steindorf who, in January 1900, performed clearing and documenting of the New Kingdom tomb of Amenhotep Huy at Qaret Helwa just off the southern limits of modern Bawīṭī.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This and the following section is a revised version of my own contribution to a co-authored essay, DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Exploration*.

<sup>21</sup> For the summary of these accounts, see FAKHRY, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, pp. 72–77.

<sup>22</sup> For his account, see BELZONI, *Narrative*.

<sup>23</sup> For the account of his visit to Baḥrīya, see CAILLIAUD, *Voyage*, pp. 144–188.

<sup>24</sup> I was unable to find out about his first name – Cailliaud refers to him as “M. Hyde”. No published account by Hyde is known to me; he is indeed said by Fakhry to have never had published his notes (FAKHRY, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, p. 109). The encounter of the two men is recorded in CAILLIAUD, *Voyage*, pp. 181–185.

<sup>25</sup> See STEINDORF, *Libysche Wüste*, pp. 136–139.

Between 1938 and 1945, Fakhry conducted the first substantial archaeological exploration in Baḥrīya, covering the north as well as the south of the Oasis.<sup>26</sup> In the south or the El-Ḥāyz Oasis, Fakhry focused on the exploration in two areas of the remains of former human presence in the vicinity of the modern-day settlements clustering around four principal water springs. In his publications, he produced the first archaeological sketch-maps of the Oasis and the surveyed areas. He also published the first descriptions and sketch-plans of the region's historical sites and selected monuments, providing preliminary dating and evaluation of their archaeological potential and state of preservation.<sup>27</sup> Among other sites, he visited and briefly described also “the ruins of a village, its cemetery and some rock-cut tombs” located about two kilometers north-east of ‘Ayn el-‘Izza and dated probably to the Roman period.<sup>28</sup> Despite some previous misinterpretations, this ancient settlement with the adjacent necropolis should be identified with the significant site known today as Bīr Shawīsh. In the area of El-Rīs, Fakhry cleared the Church<sup>29</sup> and excavated several mud-brick structures south-west of the “Fortress” identifying them as great mansions (one of these is more commonly known as the “Palace”).<sup>30</sup> He also recorded “ancient ruins” ca. 750 m south-east of the “Fortress” we could identify with the site known today as Ṭāhūna.<sup>31</sup>

After Fakhry, a geoarchaeologist of Egyptian descent, Fekri Hassan, conducted, in the 1970s, a small-scale prehistoric survey of the Oasis.<sup>32</sup>

In late 1980s and in 1990s, the Baḥrīya Oasis became the object of exploration by the Supreme Council of Antiquities. In the scope of their

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<sup>26</sup> See these published volumes: FAKHRY, Preliminary Note; IDEM, Second Report; IDEM, *Baḥria Oasis I & II*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis I*, p. 36; FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis II*, pp. 49–67; FAKHRY, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, pp. 110–124.

<sup>28</sup> Published in FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis I*, p. 36. See also FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis II*, pp. 52–54, fig. 33.

<sup>29</sup> See FAKHRY, Second Report, p. 640.

<sup>30</sup> See FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis II*, pp. 54, 60–61, figs. 39–40, pls. XL–XLII.

<sup>31</sup> See FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis II*, p. 51 fig. 31.

<sup>32</sup> See HASSAN, *Explorations*.

engagement, the team headed by Zahi Hawass conducted excavation works in the Roman period cemetery in the Valley of the Golden Mummies in the Baḥrīya Oasis's northern part near El-Qaṣr/Bawīṭī and a limited exploration consisting in the clearing of the "Palace" and a winery at El-Rīs in the Baḥrīya Oasis's southern part, together with a trial excavation of Roman period tombs north and north-west of the "Fortress" at El-Rīs and a small-scale exploration at 'Ayn el-Khabata.<sup>33</sup>

It was not then before the very turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, however, that the Small Oasis witnessed another long-term systematic exploration with the commencement of the work by the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo, focusing on what has traditionally been considered the centre of Baḥrīya in the north. This initiative was soon followed by the new project by the Czech Institute of Egyptology, directing the attention to El-Ḥāyz in the south.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See HAWASS, *Golden Mummies*.

<sup>34</sup> A representative one-volume overview of the exploration by the both teams is DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*.

## **2.4. RECENT EXPLORATION OF EL-ḤĀYZ: METHODS, RESULTS, AND PERSPECTIVES**

The new archaeological project of the Czech Institute of Egyptology in the El-Ḥāyz Oasis was launched in 2003 in response to the call by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, presented at the International Congress of Egyptologists in 2000. At the Congress, foreign missions working in Egypt were encouraged to consider extending their campaigns to this region of the country where monuments and archaeological sites were increasingly endangered by uncontrolled, rapid spread of modern occupation, intensifying agriculture, and by other human activities posing a serious threat to historical records. On the Czech side, Miroslav Verner responded to the call by initiating a new project in the Western Desert and has promoted it since. Verner's leading idea was to secure a direct access to original and contextualized sources from as wide as possible a spectrum of Ancient Egyptian civilization. Next to the traditional archaeological concession of the Institute at Abusir, with significant remains of the Old Kingdom through the Late Period (with exception, perhaps, of the Middle Kingdom), the new project in the Western Desert was to open archaeological research to the bordering prehistoric and Roman periods.

The concession granted to the Czech mission by the Egyptian authorities covered the entire El-Ḥāyz Oasis in the southern part of the Baḥrīya Oasis (ca. 20 × 30 km). In the scope of the exploration of the area,<sup>35</sup> the efforts of the Czech team were first directed towards a survey of the entire research area in order to create a more accurate and detailed archaeological map of the Oasis (2003–2006). This survey consisted in a systematic and detailed re-

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<sup>35</sup> Between 2003 and 2011, the exploration was directed by Miroslav Bárta. Since 2012, the research has been headed by Jiří Musil.

survey of the areas studied already by Fakhry and in the first general archaeological reconnaissance of the rest of the research area, including the seemingly empty stretches of landscape with a good potential for prehistoric research.

Particular attention in the systematic and detailed survey was paid to the two occupation areas in the vicinity of the four principal springs, examined previously by Fakhry: El-Ḥāyz concentrated around the springs of ‘Ayn el-‘Izza (or ‘Ayn el-Ḥāyz) and ‘Ayn el-Shaykh (or ‘Ayn el-Ḥāyz el-Bahrī) in the west and El-Rīs around ‘Ayn Rīs and ‘Ayn el-Tabla Amūn in the east. The first area encompassed the sites of Bīr Shawīsh and Gard el-Shaykh.<sup>36</sup> The second area included the sites of ‘Ayn Gom‘a, El-Rīs, Ṭāhūna, Tabla Amūn, Qaşr Mas‘ūda, and Bir ‘Ayn Naga‘. Lying outside and not belonging to either of the two occupation zones were the sites of ‘Ayn el-Khabata, Mannsaf, Umm el-Okhbayn, and Gard ‘Abyad (see Fig. 2 above). Structures and features visible on the surface of the localized sites were described and documented; the sites were dated on the basis of surface finds, in particular pottery. At selected locations, test trenches were excavated in order to establish their archaeological potential and obtain more precise dating.<sup>37</sup>

As for the general reconnaissance aimed at the study of prehistoric evidence, it was performed in the area of Gabalat Mitwalli Radwan, in the area of the “pyramid mountains” in the north of the concession, in the area of the playas dotting the bottom of the Oasis, and finally on the slopes of the escarpments delimiting the Oasis to the east, west, and south.<sup>38</sup>

In 2007, more extensive excavation was commenced at some of the previously tested sites (Bīr Shawīsh, Gard ‘Abyad). It was accompanied by a

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<sup>36</sup> The latter of the sites could be identified with the cemetery with robbed tombs briefly explored by Fakhry near ‘Ayn el-Shaykh in 1945 and roughly dated on the basis of the available material – two heads of painted plaster for a man and a woman – to the first century of our era (see FAKHRY, *Bahria Oasis* II, p. 67).

<sup>37</sup> See BÁRTA et al., Průzkum; BÁRTA & BRŮNA, Re-emergence (i.e. Chap. 2 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*).

<sup>38</sup> See SVOBODA, Prehistory (i.e., Chap. 3 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*).

more detailed study of selected groups of artefacts deriving from the excavated contexts as well as from the surveyed sites.<sup>39</sup>

Alongside the archaeological survey and excavations, an anthropological investigation of both past and present populations of the Oasis was conducted in 2004 and 2005<sup>40</sup> and a large-scale study of the Oasis's past and present environments was accomplished between 2006 and 2010.<sup>41</sup>

The pioneering exploration by Ahmed Fakhry in 1930s and 1940s rightly pointed out the abundance of historical sources in the El-Ḥāyz Oasis and the importance of engaging in a scientific examination of the history of this region. This was confirmed and further articulated by the more recent investigations headed by the Czech Institute of Egyptology, the fruits of which were presented in the first part of the *Baḥrīya Oasis* volume published in Prague in 2013 under my joint editorship with Lenka Suková.

Looking to the future, I believe that the available sources can open gates to many different issues, many of which seem to transcend the narrow confines of the Oasis or a single discipline. The previous research has yielded several groups of artifacts as well as archaeological data that certainly deserve proper publication. One should also hope that more archaeological excavations will be possible at the site in a not distant future. What is certain in any case is that responsible research is impossible without continued surveying, careful stratigraphic excavation, rigorous documentation and recording, and contextual study of the artefacts. Examining anthropic activities exhibited in the complex relationships among landscape (fields, irrigation works), architecture (fortifications, houses, workshops, cult installations, tombs), artefacts (not so a mere classification but their functional analyses), pictorial evidence, texts, and

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<sup>39</sup> See MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Besiedlung*; and DOSPĚL, *Written, inscribed and decorated* (i.e. Chaps. 4 and 6 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Baḥrīya Oasis*); and also MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, and MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Římská spona*.

<sup>40</sup> See KUJANOVÁ & ČERNÝ, *Anthropology* (i.e., Chap. 8 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Baḥrīya Oasis*).

<sup>41</sup> See POKORNÝ & POKORNÁ, “*Agoul landscapes*” (i.e., Chap. 7 in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Baḥrīya Oasis*).

inscriptions simultaneously will not only produce a more convincing account of the everyday life; it will also provide answers about the landscape uses, sustainability, local economies, production and consumption patterns, commerce, uses of space, and social-political settings. A more holistic, interdisciplinary approach to the archaeological record is therefore especially imperative, particularly because the available data are not straightforward but rather complex. Any single-minded or over-specialized approach is certainly destined to fail in understanding both the larger picture and more nuanced issues. Despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence, a comprehensive, interpretative approach might help us recognize these patterns and functions, and their changes through time (diachronic perspectives), both within single sites and in the larger Oasis (synchronic perspectives).

## 2.5. BĪR SHAWĪSH

### 2.5.1. Topography of the site

Situated in the western part of the El-Ḥāyz Oasis, the site of BĪr Shawīsh lies to the east from the modern-day village or hamlet of Gharbiyya, from which it is now separated by a massive sand-dune running approximately in south-north direction. Thanks to several survey seasons between 2003 and 2006, we have now a solid idea of the topography of the site and its main components. While the main components were overviewed under 2.2. and more detailed presentation is available elsewhere,<sup>42</sup> I shall now limit myself to a few remarks directly related to the inscribed material.

The settlement of BĪr Shawīsh covers an area of approximately 20 ha. Anthropic activities there were documented in three distinct locations situated in south-north direction over an area more than 2 km long and running parallel with the sand-dune to the west.

Local landscape is characteristic by a vast number of vegetation mounds locally known as *agouls*. These landscape features are up to 18 m high mounds formed around and under tamarisk trees – dead or alive. Their formation requires a synergic growth of the plant and the underlying body of sand mixed with and compacted by organic litter (typically the tree's fallout). Since it is highly improbable that a tamarisk would strike root in an arid environment, the origins of these *agouls* are believed to date back to the period of history when there still was enough water to support seedlings, in other words, to Late Antiquity – a suggestion supported by radiocarbon analysis of charred plant macrofossils. Some furthermore suggest that the vegetation

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<sup>42</sup> Preliminary assessment of archaeology of BĪr Shawīsh is available in MUSIL et al., Egyptian Western Desert, pp. 28a–49a.



mounds provided protection to mud-brick structures saving them from erosion.<sup>43</sup>

The only extant free-standing trees at the site are located by the hut of the local *ghafir* in the northern section of Bīr Shawīsh. Located there are also visible remains of cultivating activities. The still apparent field plots must be remains of a private enterprise by a local retired police officer who had been growing rice there using water from the local well, until the SCA banned water pumping at the site about half a century ago in order to prevent damage to the antiquities.<sup>44</sup> It is worth mentioning that it is this section of the site that is properly called Bīr Shawīsh, meaning “The policeman’s well”, while the ancient name remains unknown.

Subterranean irrigation known as the *qanāt* system has been mapped at and around Bīr Shawīsh in the total length estimated at 15 km. This system of tunnels and shafts were used to drain water out of a water-bearing rock stratum and channel it to the settlement. Persian by origin, this water-managing technological invention must have been able to provide substantial supply of water to the ancient inhabitants of Bīr Shawīsh, considering the obviously tedious construction and maintenance. The system of *qanāts* is located east and north-east of the settlement to cover an area of about 700 ha.<sup>45</sup>

The most important components of the site are habitations or houses. So far four distinct mud-brick buildings were identified at the site as houses, numbered 1 to 4 and considered individual farms.<sup>46</sup> We shall now pay attention particularly to House 3 from which the entire corpus of the material presented in this volume derives (except for one ostrakon).

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<sup>43</sup> The *agouls* of El-Hāyz are treated in detail in POKORNÝ – POKORNÁ, “*Agoul* landscapes.” The theory involving archaeological remains is presented on p. 118.

<sup>44</sup> See already my note in DOSPĚL – SUKOVÁ, *Exploration*, p. 10. The same fields are believed by some to date to the Roman Period; see MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> On *qanats*, including at Bīr Shawīsh, see DE ANGELI, *Qanat* landscapes, where you will find abundant literature for further reading. See also CRESSEY, *Qanats*.

<sup>46</sup> Preliminary archaeological evaluation of the site is presented in MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, pp. 28a–49a. The data I present here on House 3 are mostly based on that paper. For a ground-plan of House 3, see Fig. 6 under 3.1.1.

House 3 is located in the southern section of the site between House 2 and House 4 (see the map Fig. 5 below); it is oblong in shape, measuring 37 x 23 m. The house appears to have three floors and contain 33 rooms. The ground-plan also allows us to recognize two main parts of the house – one dominated by an (open?) courtyard in the west and one apparently residential in the east (see the ground-plan under 3.1.1). Minor probing excavations were carried out in 2005, followed by more extensive archaeological work in 2007. Excavators uncovered the crowns of the walls of the whole structure and then focused on the NE sector of the house and rooms 11 and 12 in particular. Even though neither of these rooms was excavated completely, they are by far the most thoroughly investigated parts of the house yielding the vast majority of available archaeological data including inscribed material; this, obviously, needs to be considered in any interpretation of the material.

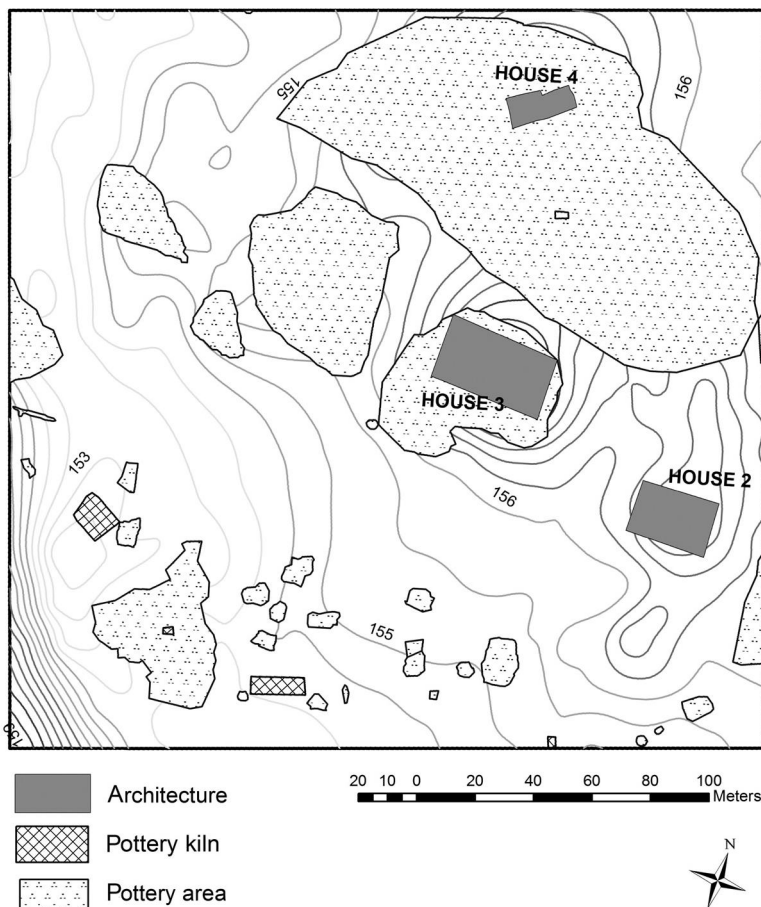


Fig. 5: Map of Bīr Shawīsh South (by VB).

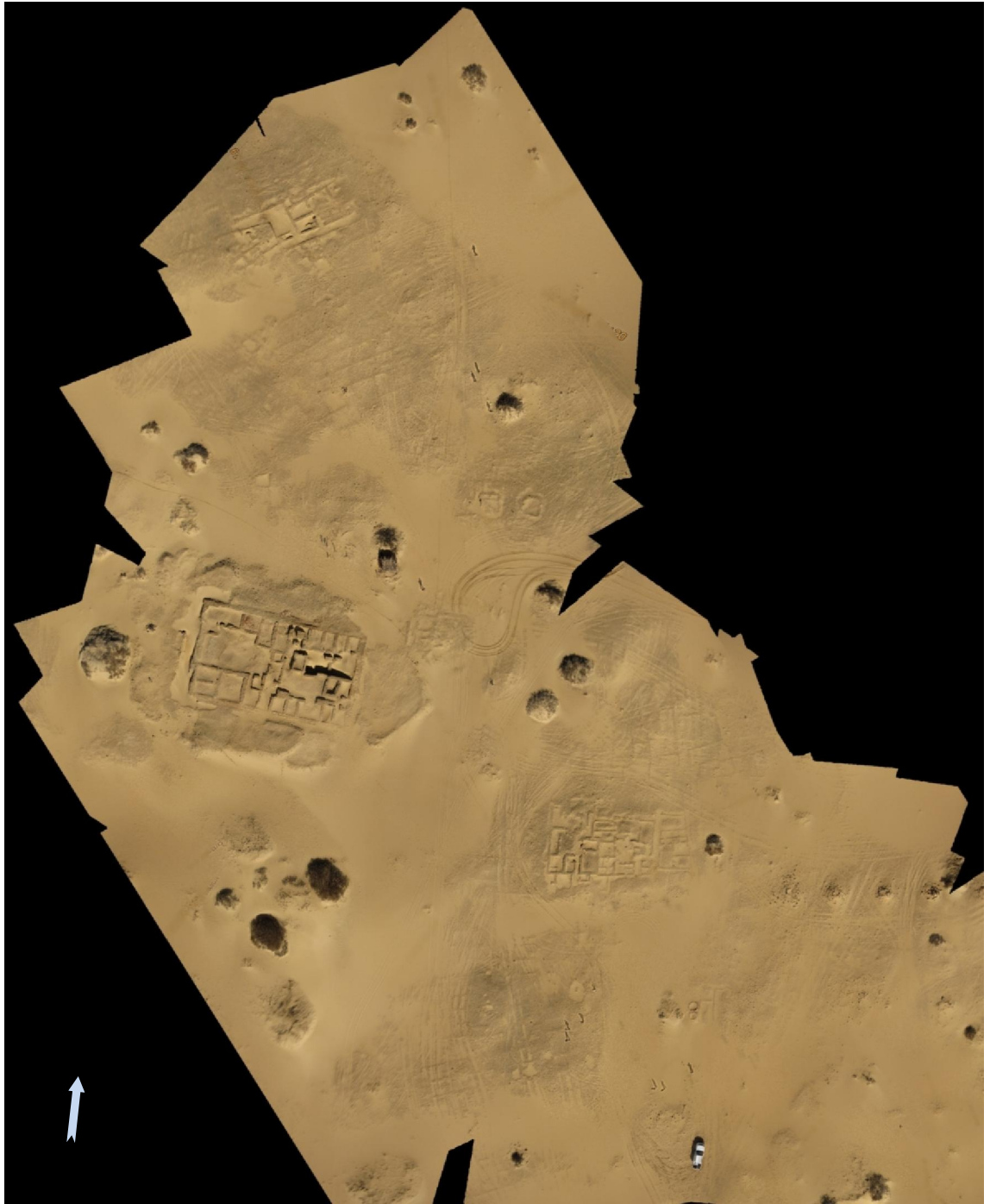


Fig. 6: Aerial kite photograph of the south-eastern part of Bīr Shawīsh with Houses 4, 3, and 2 (top to bottom) and other structures apparent under the surface; state in 2012. By a sheer luck, the picture was taken after it had rained which made the mud-brick structures more visible. (photo by VB).

Identified at the site were also pottery kilns with adjacent (workshop?) buildings (see under 4.3.2). What remains to be identified is the rubbish dump.

### **2.5.2. Dating of the site and House 3**

Pottery certainly ranks among the prime material archaeology uses to date sites and structures in all ceramic cultures of the ancient world. However, ceramic production is never as sensitive a means of dating and as subject to formal developments as we would wish. The study of pottery – however diligent – cannot provide any precise dates; their chronological range usually spans several decades at minimum. Preliminary study of the surface pottery finds at Bīr Shawīsh provides, accordingly, rather wide range of dating. Fragments of imported ceramic vessels are dated between the first and sixth century.<sup>47</sup> As for the corpus excavated from House 3, however, a narrower chronology has recently been suggested based mostly on the study of ceramic imports. Reported is African Red-Slip Ware dated between 320 and 380/400 (type Hayes F 59) and in the second half of the fourth to early fifth century (Hayes F 65). Very frequent were also LR1 amphorae dated from the second half of the fourth to early fifth century as well. Although there was other ware that could be dated as late as early sixth century, the opposite end of its production can actually bring us back to the fourth century.

A mintage of coins, on the other hand, can be dated to the reign of a single sovereign and even more precisely. Roman period sites in Egypt are usually source of substantial numbers of coin finds. Where we can assign them to securely excavated archaeological contexts, the coins become a powerful dating tool.

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<sup>47</sup> MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Besiedlung*, pp. 65–66. The earliest reported shape are transport amphorae “similar to the type Dressel 1B” (MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 47).

At Bīr Shawīsh, 68 coins were obtained through the excavation of House 3 in 2005 and 2007.<sup>48</sup> They have not been cleaned of oxidized crust or treated by a trained conservator, while their preliminary study was done with photographs only. As a result, only 15 coins were dated with any precision to the period from the last third of the third century through to the last third of the fourth century. They are all rather small bronze money and were apparently lost individually. The earliest mintages are represented by four examples of provincial billon tetradrachms dated before 296 CE, while the latest are the mintages from the very end of the fourth century and these are the AE maiorina of Theodosius I (379–395 CE; Obj. No. 114/BS/07) and AE IV of Valentinianus II and his co-emperors (375–423 CE; Obj. No. 208.1/BS/07).<sup>49</sup> This means that we have no identifiable mintages coming from the excavated contexts of House 3 that would possibly date later than the early fifth century, which the date confirmed by O. Bir Sh. 1. It should also be underlined that these coins come from the same stratigraphic layers as some of the ostraka: the AE maiorina of Theodosius I – according to the field-book – shares the same context with O. Bir Sh. **21**; **30**; and **33**; while the AE IV of Valentinianus II comes from the same context as our **49**.

We can conclude that while pottery offers dates spanning several centuries, the two reliably dated types of evidence – namely ostraka and coins – identically narrow the span of time to the late fourth century.

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<sup>48</sup> Coins found on the surface of the site during surveys have to be put aside; their information is not probative of the actual occupational horizon.

<sup>49</sup> The technical information provided here is based on Jiří Militký's 2008 expert opinion (National Museum, Prague); Militký provided a report on the coins from Bīr Shawīsh, but worked only with photographs of the coins which had not been treated by a conservator.



### 3. INSCRIBED MATERIAL FROM BĪR SHAWĪSH

The following is the core chapter of the dissertation. It consists of presentation of papyrological and epigraphic evidence made available through the recent archaeological exploration of Bīr Shawīsh.

It should be stressed at the outset of this chapter that what has come down to us is a mere shadow of the inscribed material that once existed. Despite this obvious loss, the surviving evidence can be considered indicative and representative of the lived realities of the ancient world.<sup>50</sup>

Another important premise is that the papyrological and epigraphic sources cannot and should not be looked at as mere texts and inscriptions, as it mostly has been the case. These sources should rather be considered as being between text and object. To state that texts are also artifacts might not be surprising, for they are texts recorded on a material support using complex systems of communication. When we ask what a papyrus or an inscription is, we can give three fundamentally different answers. First, one could present a linguistic perspective and say that they are signifiers on a physical support. From the purely archeological perspective, however, papyri and inscriptions are artifacts bearing text. Another possible perspective is historical-literary in nature, as it regards papyri and inscriptions as texts carved or painted on a durable material to be posted or kept.

Neither of the above-stated perspectives is wrong, but the significance of ancient texts can be fully comprehended only through an inclusive approach,

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<sup>50</sup> On this subject, see BAGNALL, *Everyday Writing*.

which would integrate all possible aspects of the evidence at hand. Indeed, in the past, scholars opted for just one of these viewpoints and most of them approached inscriptions as texts, which is understandable when their only task was to publish the texts on papyri or other supports. The new trend in the study of the ancient world has been in bringing the perspectives of different disciplines together in order to achieve a more complex appreciation of historical sources. Inscribed material truly needs to be looked at as between text and object and it needs to be described, read and interpreted by means of at least a threefold approach: archaeological, textual, and historical. Any writing executed and preserved in/on pottery, stone, wood, wax or other materials has both material and abstract dimensions, both of which should be acknowledged and given due attention in our studies text-bearing artifacts.

The support for all the texts and decorative elements, as presented on the following pages, whether inscribed, or incised, or painted, is baked potter's clay, or earthenware, commonly also termed pottery or ceramics.

It is far from surprising that no vestiges of papyri have been found at Bīr Shawīsh to date. This may be due to several factors. One might be that papyrus has a much lower chance of surviving in unfavorable environmental conditions. Still another might include everyday practices and scribal preferences in writing certain types of documents on ostraka rather than on papyrus. In this case, the scarcity of papyri discovered in our excavations might suggest that few writings of the kind commonly recorded on this support were produced at the site. Furthermore, it is very likely that discarded papyrus leaves were burned as fuel in desert environments, where sources of fuel are very limited.<sup>51</sup> More acute than this rather theoretical assumption, however, is the threat of humidity from modern agriculture. In the western oases, at least, this may be responsible for the disappearance of papyrus at archaeological sites closer to cultivated land. It is well demonstrated at Kellis in the Dakhla Oasis

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<sup>51</sup> Point originally made by Jean-Pierre Brun and published by H. Cuvigny in her essay on "une culture de l'ostrakon" (CUVIGNY, *Route*, p. 267), later elaborated upon by R. BAGNALL (*Everyday Writing*, pp. 117–118).



that many Greek and Coptic papyri survive at locations safe from humidity. One also should not omit the threat from persistent ground water at some localities. Some or all of these factors combined may explain the striking predominance of ostraka in papyrological documentation, not only in the Baḥrīya Oasis, but also from much larger and more intensively excavated sites in deserts both east and west of the Nile Valley.

Notwithstanding these observations, Fakhry mentions that “according to the inhabitants [of the modern hamlet near ‘Ayn el-‘Izza], papyri was found” by illicit diggers around 1910 “inside a pottery jar in one of the rock tombs” cut in a ridge not far from the ancient village located approximately two kilometers northeast of ‘Ayn el-‘Izza.<sup>52</sup> This location, I believe, should be identified with the site known today as Bīr Shawīsh or Gard el-Shaykh one kilometer south. While Fakhry states that “no inscriptions were found inside [the tombs]”,<sup>53</sup> it is not clear from his account whether there were any texts written on those papyri, though their storage in a jar suggests there were.

Linguistically, all the texts on ostraka are in a form of Hellenistic Greek or *koine*. It will become apparent to any reader that the texts reflect local habits and varying command of the language by individual scribes. Given the historical context, we could expect to encounter texts in Coptic language besides those written in Greek. However, no discernible documents in Coptic have been found at Bīr Shawīsh to date. There is, nevertheless, one likely Coptic inscription on a flagon excavated in House 3 (I. Bir Sh. 5). A hint of a Coptic scribal hand can furthermore be seen in majuscule letters of Greek alphabet preserved of three short inscriptions written on another vessel from House 3 (I. Bir Sh. 2).

Before the texts are presented, rules that govern the editorial work need to be premissed.

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<sup>52</sup> FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis* 2, pp. 54 & 66; see also FAKHRY, *Baḥriyah and Farafra*, p. 112.

<sup>53</sup> FAKHRY, *Baḥria Oasis* 2, p. 54.

### 3.0. NOTES ON EDITORIAL PROCEDURE

The following notes are aimed at helping any reader properly understand the texts as edited and make him or her aware of the challenges, limitations, and even risks of actual readings as presented. They might also enable the reader to benefit from the data assembled as much as possible. I will first present the overall organization of the edition and then explain the structure of individual entries.

The edition is organized by both the character of the written material and the technical properties of this material or objects on which these texts were inscribed. Hence, ostraka appear separate from other, informal inscribed material, such as pottery.

Ostraka are not organized according to archaeological context of the sherds or according to any physical properties of the ostraka as material artifacts. Instead, I decided to present the ostraka and their texts organized into groups according to well-known categories of documents characteristic of ostraka. Typological arrangement is not only the predominant practice in the field of papyrology allowing readers to readily consult similar texts, but it also does not, in our case at least, make the archaeological connections much less obvious, since the entire corpus that is being presented here comes from a single house (House 3) and predominantly from a single room of the house, with the sole exception of No. 1, which is from House 4. Nevertheless, the grouping according to archaeological context of the ostraka is provided in a transparent and even handier and more useful way in Table 3 below (see p. 69).

Individual texts are numbered in a sequence from 1 to 50 regardless of their object or field numbers, which are given within the description data paragraph for individual pieces. The table *Concordance between Object and Publication Numbers*, attached as Appendix 1 in the back of this volume, provides a clear overview of both, available also in the reverse order of

*Concordance between Publication and Object Numbers* appended as Appendix 2.

Each of the edited texts and inscriptions is prefaced by a section consisting of four to six basic elements: Identifiers – Provenance – Material qualities – Information on the text proper – Scribal hand and the execution of the script – Previous publications.

Thus, every object and text is identified in its header by a unique publication number and a brief title. Immediately below this header, the reader will find the unique Object Number that had been given to the respective object during the excavation.<sup>54</sup> In three instances, ostraka had been numbered in the field as a group (22 pieces share number 16; 11 pieces share number 83; and two pieces come under number 102); they are apparently groups of pieces that had been found together in bulk. In one single case of Object No. 83/BS/07 the reader will notice a conflict between the number recorded in the description paragraph and the number apparent on the picture; the conflict is a result of subsequent renumbering to avoid having two artifacts with the same number. Another ostrakon has no excavation number and appears as “SineNum”. The Object Number is paired with a reference number directing the reader to the Plates attached at the back of the volume. The Plates are numbered according to publication numbers, in Roman numerals.

The provenance section encompasses the archaeological context and circumstances of discovery, including the date of discovery or identification of the piece. Available documentation usually indicates the context in broader terms; it includes information about “Context” which has to be understood to

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<sup>54</sup> To avoid confusion, a note on terminology is due. The field documentation uses “Excavation No.”, institutional database uses “Find No.” to refer to the number that had been given to selected artifacts in the course of excavation. I am using in this volume the term “Object Number”, while in my previous publication (in DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, *Bahriya Oasis*) I gave preference to Excavation No. (synonymous to Field No., in my view). The only reasoning behind this change is the understanding of excavated material as artifacts or objects; this notion, I believe, is better expressed by “Object Number” than it would be “Find Number”, while “Inventory No.” seems to imply a collection.

mean a stratigraphic layer. I have included this data labelling them “SU” (= stratigraphic unit). It has to be stressed out, however, that these layers of vertical stratigraphy do not represent deposition layers. Since the excavators assumed deposition layers be lacking from the archaeological record, they proceeded by mechanical layers about 20 cm thick (more under 3.1.1.).<sup>55</sup> Coordinates within a given SU are only rarely available.

Material qualities include dimensions (first horizontal, second vertical – with respect to the text) and state of preservation. Unfortunately, information on pottery fabrics could not be included here, as it was not available to me in the time of writing this text. It does not appear in the recorded documentation and no detailed report on the pottery has been published to date. Similarly, the slip is not commented on here.

Information on the text proper typically describes location, extent, and (in)completeness of the inscribed text.

The two remaining fields in the description section – Scribal hand and Previous publications – do not require further comments.

Although the vast majority of the textual and inscribed material presented below came down to us as a very closely defined group – both spatially and temporarily – it poses some common problems. Fundamental problems arise from the difficulties of reading or even deciphering texts written on poorly preserved writing supports. The level of preservation of individual texts varies considerably and is affected by both ancient and recent fragmentation of the material supports (ceramic in their entirety) and abrasion, effacement, or fading of the ink used to record the texts by the means of a reed pen. Adding to such difficulties is the fact that several skilled and unskilled hands participated in composing the texts, the result being different handwritings, diverse styles and variable care applied. Significantly helpful in reading and understanding the texts, on the other hand, is the fact that all texts belong to the realm of economy

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<sup>55</sup> For this methodological decision, see MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 36b.

and administration of one (?) agricultural estate (οἶκος) and as such tend to be formulaic in their phrasing and repetitive in terminology and even feature recurring individual personalities. Despite (or, perhaps, because of) these commonalities in their contents, a large number of texts have to some degree been reconstructed or read only tentatively, while others remain unread altogether.

The **texts** proper are presented as an edition followed by an *apparatus criticus* and a translation (where possible). There has been a debate in the papyrological community on how to number the lines of edited texts; some editors prefer to number every third line, while others only every fourth, and still others recommend to number individual lines. For obvious practical reasons, I opted for numbering individual lines in the present volume. Abbreviated words are presented expanded in full (in parentheses) and in the grammatical form required by the given context. Marks on or after numerals and numbers are also indicated in the main text. The *apparatus* contains corrections of non-standard spellings and grammatical errors, as well as graphs in the text expanded and indications of abbreviation marks and of visual arrangement of letters (superscript, e.g.). **Commentary** on individual matters or words is provided in a separate section subdivided into units numbered by lines.

In presenting the texts, the usual papyrological practices were adhered to, including the following:

In expanding abbreviations or reconstructing lost parts of the texts, standard orthography is adhered to through out the corpus, as any attempt at presenting those “missing” parts of text according to the orthographical particularity of an individual document or a scribe or the region would be problematic in being too subjective and arbitrary despite any general observations and preferences of particular scribes or documents.

Greek and Coptic were typed using the IFAO-Grec Unicode font conceived by Jean-Luc Fournet and developed by Ralph Hancock, with the help of Adam Bülow-Jacobsen.

Papyrological sources are cited according to John F. OATES, Roger S. BAGNALL, Sarah J. CLACKSON, Alexandra A. O'BRIEN, Joshua D. SOSIN, Terry G. WILFONG, and Klaas A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, the latest version of which is available also on-line, at <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>.

Following signs are used in the edition:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| ( )           | Round brackets or parentheses contain the resolution of an abbreviation or a symbol ( <i>siglum</i> ).  |
| [ ]           | Square brackets mark off lacunae (parts of the text lost through physical damage) and, eventually, restored by the editor; <i>restitui</i> .  |
| ⟨ ⟩           | Angle brackets or chevrons enclose letters omitted in the text by the scribe and supplemented in the edition by the editor; <i>supplevi</i> . |
| { }           | Curly brackets mark text erroneously written by the scribe and thus deleted by the editor; <i>delevi</i> .                                    |
| [ ]           | Double square brackets enclose letters or words that the scribe wrote and then cancelled; <i>deletum</i> .                                    |
| ˘ ˙           | Combination of grave and acute accent encloses letters inserted above the line by the scribe; <i>superscriptum</i> .                          |
| α β γ δ       | Underdotting marks letters the reading of which is tentative or would be uncertain outside the given context.                                 |
| [± 5]         | (Approximate) number of letters lost in a lacuna and not restored.  |
| TRACES, . . . | Marks position of letters of which part or all remain but which have not been read or restored.   |

As an abbreviation for our corpus of ostraka, I suggest **O. Bir Sh.**; the inscriptions, accordingly, are abbreviated as **I. Bir Sh.**

### **3.1. OSTRAKA**

This group of ostraka consists of otherwise well known types of texts that occur on ostraka. Grouped together according to the type, O. Bir Sh. include accounts, memoranda, orders, and, above all, receipts.

It should also be stated that these represent the entirety of inscribed potsherds found at Bīr Shawīsh to date; poorly preserved or nearly illegible pieces were not eliminated here, although it may be deemed reasonable for a future publication.

#### **3.1.1. Archaeological contexts of ostraka and inscriptions**

The actual archaeological context of our source material shall be best understood from a visualized and systemized presentation, hence the figure and the table below.

Figure 7 below presents the preliminary ground-plan of House 3 as established after the 2005 and 2007 excavation seasons. Numbering of the rooms within the house is self-evident and requires but one necessary remark on Room 11 and Room 12. These two rooms were labeled as such early into the excavation of the house in late April 2007. When later in the course of the excavation it became apparent that the two respective rooms in fact formed one space and should be therefore considered one room, these rooms were re-labeled to reflect the change in interpretation. As a result, Room 12 was eliminated and became Room 11W, while the former Room 11 was relabeled Room 11E. Two major problems resulted from this shift. First, following a re-

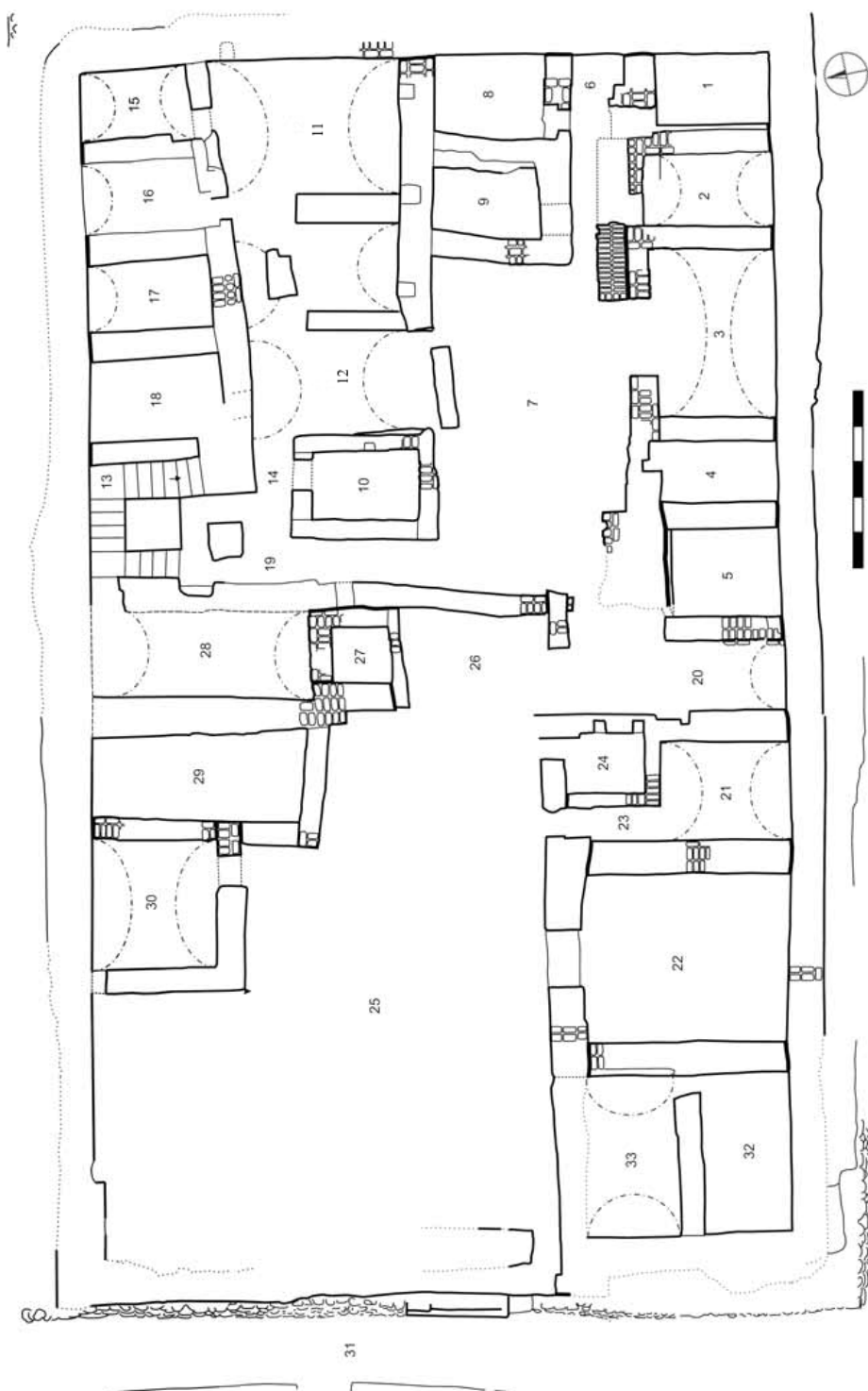


Fig. 7: Preliminary ground-plan of House 3, Bīr Shawīsh, with room numbers and indication of vaults of the lower floor (adapted, with minor corrections, from MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 37, fig. 40).



consideration of the vaults in a recent publication, the “united” room was “split” again into two and these rooms were given their original numbers “Room 11” and “Room 12”, respectively, but in reverse order.<sup>56</sup> Second, the division between the two rooms in the field documentation is not consistent; since we lack precise coordinates of the find-spots for most of our ostraka, it is quite possible that some of them may have been misattributed and ended up in the other room.

The immediately following Table 3 presents data available for the archaeological context of O. Bir Sh. (a separate table is provided further below for I. Bir Sh.). Ostraka in this table are organized by their archaeological context, which includes House, Room, Stratigraphic Unit (SU), and the depth of deposition below the current surface, together with more descriptive data (when available) and individuals mentioned. Regrettably, only some ostraka actually come with any precisely documented archaeological context. Since full publication of archaeology of the excavated house is yet to come, the information provided here on the archaeological context derives solely from the field documentation available to me and some preliminary observations published in a paper presenting results of the hitherto surveying of the area.<sup>57</sup> Available documentation usually indicates a context in broader terms; it includes information about “Context” which has to be understood to mean stratigraphic layer. Such “Contexts” are defined by the depth of deposition (occasionally a wider range). In absence of description data for given “Contexts”, however, it is difficult to determine whether an artifact comes from mud-brick (wall / roof / vault) collapse, from occupation debris, from habitation layer above floor, from room fill, from wind-blown sand covering collapse, or from a dump layer. I have included this data labeled as “SU” (= stratigraphic unit). It is even more difficult because these stratigraphic units are mechanical layers rather than deposition layers defined by their character. It

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<sup>56</sup> See MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 37, fig. 40. The plan below (Fig. 6) keeps the original numbering.

<sup>57</sup> The paper is MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*.

has to be pointed out that the SU numbers are not unique, as SUs in each room were numbered separately in a sequence starting with 1. To be sure, these units or layers (called “Contexts” in the field documentation) are mechanical layers. Coordinates within a given SU are only rarely available for ostraka. Another potential problem can be demonstrated on No. 19: it comprises of Obj. Nos. 45/BS/07 and 244/BS/07 found reportedly on May 2 and 12, respectively, about 60 cm apart in vertical stratigraphy, while the breakage lines look recent. And finally, human error could have occurred in information on archaeological context of the ostraka identified only subsequently within the groups of pottery fragments that had been preselected during the excavation for drawn documentation.

Therefore, caution is necessary in using this archaeological data in our interpretations. Although more information on archaeological context of the inscribed material would be helpful, it seems that most pieces come out from primary contexts – habitation layers mixed with collapse of mud-brick structural elements.

Today, the entire corpus of artifacts is stored in the local Ministry of Antiquities magazines in Bawītī, Baḥrīya Oasis.

| <b>Publ. No.</b> | <b>House</b> | <b>Room</b> | <b>SU</b> | <b>Commentary</b>                          |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--|
| 1                | 4            | 1           | –         | Niche 3, N wall                            |
| 2                | 3            | 12          | 1         | 60–80 cm deep                              |
| 3                | 3            | 8           | 1         |  |
| 4                | 3            | 12          | 1         | 60–80 cm deep                              |
| 5                | 3            | 11W         | 6         | 270 cm deep; 40 off S wall, 485 off W wall |
| 6                | 3            | 12          | 1         | 60–80 cm deep                              |
| 7                | 3            | 12          | 1         | 60–80 cm deep                              |
| 8                | 3            | 11E         | 5         | 140 cm deep; 70 off E wall, 130 off N wall |
| 9                | 3            | 11          | 3         | 110 cm deep; by conjecture                 |
| 10               | 3            | 12          | 1         | 60–80 cm deep                              |
| 11               | 3            | 8           | 1         |  |
| 12               | 3            | 19          | -         | 0 to 50 cm above the floor (?)             |
| 13               | 3            | 11          | 3         | Niche 2, S wall                            |
| 14               | 3            | 12          | 1         | 60–80 cm deep                              |

| Publ. No. | House | Room | SU | Commentary                                |
|-----------|-------|------|----|---|
| 15        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 16        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 17        | 3     | 19   | -  | fill behind a pillar (floor deposit?)     |
| 18        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 19        | 3     | 12   | 2  | 140 cm deep, by S niche                   |
| 19        | 3     | 11W  | 5  | 200 deep; 440 off W wall, 110 off S wall  |
| 20        | 3     | 2    | 1  | 40 cm deep                                |
| 21        | 3     | 11E  | 4  | 180 cm deep; 20 off E wall, 30 off S wall |
| 22        | 3     | 12   | 2  | 140 cm deep, by a nich in S wall          |
| 23        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 24        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 25        | 3     | 12   | 2  | 120 deep; by S wall, 155 off W wall       |
| 26        | 3     | 11   | 3  | 110 deep; 210 off E wall, 95 off S wall   |
| 27        | 3     | 11E  | 3  | 140 deep (by conjecture)                  |
| 28        | 3     | 11E  | 2  | by conjecture                             |
| 29        | 3     | 12   |    | by S niche                                |
| 30        | 3     | 11E  | 4  | 160 cm deep                               |
| 31        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 32        | 3     | 11E  | 6  | by conjecture                             |
| 33        | 3     | 11E  | 4  | 180 deep; 20 off E wall, 30 off S wall    |
| 34        | 3     | 7    | 1  | by conjecture                             |
| 35        | 3     | 8    | 1  |   |
| 36        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 37        | 3     | 19   | -  | by conjecture                             |
| 38        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 39        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 40        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 41        | 3     | 12   | 1  | 60–80 cm deep                             |
| 42        | 3     | 12   | 2  | 80 deep                                   |
| 43        | 3     | 12   | 2  | 120 cm deep; by S wall, 155 off W wall    |
| 44        | 3     | 8    | 1  |   |
| 45        | 3     | 8    | 1  |   |
| 46        | 3     | 8    | 1  |   |
| 47        | 3     | -    | -  | fill of Room 12?                          |
| 48        | 3     | 11W  | 6  | 290 deep; 240 off S wall, 360 off W wall  |
| 49        | 3     | 11E  | 6  | by conjecture                             |
| 50        | 3     | 25   | 1  | by conjecture                             |

Tab. 3: Data for the archaeological context of O. Bir Sh.

### 3.1.2. Edition, translation, and commentary

#### *I. Accounts and lists (1–4)*

##### **1. Account of outgoings**

Object No. 30/BS/05

Plate No. I

August 4, 403

From House 4, Room 1, northern niche (i.e., Niche 3); the bottom of the niche is 50 cm above the most recent floor; no precise coordinates recorded.

Found with the inscribed side facing down; fragments of glass under it.

Found within the excavation of House 4 on Nov. 19, 2005.

Dimensions 11.3 × 12 cm, 10.7 mm thick. Complete.

Inscribed on concave side only, obliquely to the throwing marks.

The hand is mostly semi-cursive, with numerals written in distinctively elaborate, print hand.

- 1 (ἔτους) οθς Μεσορῆ ια
- 2 παρεδόθη Ἰρήνη ἐν τῷ ἡλι-
- 3 αστηρίῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ καταγρίμ(ατος)
- 4 (ἔτους) οθς πρώτη τὰ ἡμικ(άδια) ρκβ
- 5 καὶ ἐν τῇ καμάρ(α) ιδ καὶ εἰς πο-
- 6 τίσαι ἡμικ(άδια) ιγ, τρυγίων
- 7 ἡμικ(άδια) ζ καὶ καινοῦ ἐν τῇ
- 8 καμάρᾳ ἡμικ(άδια) κη.
- 9 Ὅρ κερα(μενς) ἔγραψα.

1 L ostr.      2 read Εἰρήνη      3 read κατακρίμ( )      4 L ostr.      read πρώτης  
 ἡμι<sup>~</sup>ostr.      PKB~~z~~ ostr.      5 καμάρ ΙΔ ostr.      6 ἡμι<sup>~</sup> ΙΓ ostr.      7 ἡμι<sup>~</sup> Ζ  
 ostr.      8 ἡμι<sup>~</sup> ΚΗ ostr.

“In the year 79, Mesore 11. It has been handed over to Irene in the sunning-ground from the penalty payment (for) the year 79, the year of the first (indiction), 122 half-*kadion* jars; and 14 (half-*kadion* jars) into the store-room and 13 half-*kadion* jars for irrigating; 7 half-*kadion* jars of lees and 28 half-*kadion* jars of newly-made wine into the store-room. I, Hor, the potter have written (this).”

The first part of the text (lines 2-6) records the delivery of jars, while the second part (lines 6-8) refers to jars of lees and new wine. It is not apparent from the text with what commodity measured in half-*kadion* jars we are dealing on lines 4 to 6. Given the other two commodities (lees and new wine, on lines 6 and 7), one could infer it concerns wine or must; but why then the wine is not introduced the same way lees and new wine are? Although not stated explicitly in the text, the most plausible explanation might be that the delivery comprised of empty jars (consider also the large numbers!). It is only somewhat puzzling that the transaction does not involve rather a round number of jars.

Particularly intriguing is the measure used throughout the text. It appears four times, each time abbreviated as ἡμι<sup>~</sup> where the squibbled superscript most likely represents κ. If this is so, it could stand for (*half-k*)*eramia*, (*half-k*)*otylai*, or (*half-k*)*adia*; my choice of ἡμι<sup>~</sup>κ'(άδια) gives preference to the most common measure of them three and one attested also beyond the second century CE. Even more suggestive of the measure is reading of the concave side of the otherwise badly readable 37 where we might actually have this measure written out in full. The two occurrences of half-*kados* jars in PN are *P. Lond.* III 1259r.7.12 (dated ca. 330; used for oil) and *P. Oxy.* XLI

2982.10 (dated 150–299; probably empty), but in neither case is the measure abbreviated as ἡμι᾽κ´( ). It is not inconceivable, however, to interpret the squibbled superscript as a β, in which case we could read (*half-b*)*oxion*; no such measure is attested, however, and *boxion* itself is very rare and geographically specific (cf., e.g., *KAAB* and the discussion there on p. 49). In any case, it is very unlikely that this abbreviation stand for more than just one particular measure in this text.

1 One of the few precise datings among the corpus. Converted value is based on the assumption that Small Oasis, due to its ties with Oxyrhynchos in the Valley, followed the practice of computing years according to the regnal years of Constantius II, i.e. the so-called Era of Oxyrhynchos (see discussion under 4.1.1).

2 The impersonal statement without the name of a payer (?) I take to confirm that the present document is an account written by the supplier himself, not a receipt. Receiver's name is provided and that one is female (Ἰρήνη, a variant form of Εἰρήνη). The fourth-century (and later) occurrences of this spelling of the name are *P. Kel.* IV 96.136 and *P. Mich.* XVIII 793.13. There are no visible signs in the text of abbreviation to suggest it stands for a different, eventually male name, such as Ἰρηναῖος. Although one could consider the involvement in penalty payments of a local police cheaf plausible, to interpret and amend ἰρήνη as εἰρήναρχος “eirenarch” or “justice of the peace”, would seem unjustified given the implied vowel interchange and the fact that there is no other instance of a similarly abbreviated form for eirenarch in published papyrological documentation.

2–3 As the securely legible -|αστηρίω offers a good variety of feasible restorations, a number of possibilities were considered, including δικ-, ἐργ-, κωμ-, and μον-. An *hēliastērion* is the most conceivable given the commodities at stake; after all, the initial *eta* is reasonably discernible. In general, the word is well attested from the second half of the first century CE onwards. One should not be misled by LSJ (s.v., “a place for drying fruit”) to assume the text might concern grapes of vine. In documentary papyri, the word *hēliastērion* in

fact denotes “a sunning-ground” which was typically an enclosed place in the open air and was used to store the new wine and mature it by the direct heat of the sun.<sup>58</sup>

3 In papyrological evidence, κατάκριμα “penalty” typically appears together with payments, hence the translation “penalty payment” (or “fine”). For discussion of the term in the third fourth of the first century, see KRUSE 1999 where possibility of it denoting an extraordinary tax payment (*Sonderabgabe*) is scrutinized and confirmed as exceptional measures following the economical crisis under Claudius and Nero. It seems unlikely that similar usage could be extrapolated to the early fifth century. There is no indication in the text of what the cause of the implied liability for penalty payment was.

4 Πρώτη(ς) “(in the) first” denotes, most probably, an indiction year. This assumption is further supported by the actual correspondence of the era year 79 (i.e., 402/403 CE) with the first year of the indiction cycle.

5–6 Grammatically correct formulation would contain the definite article, to read εἰς τὸ ποτίσαι “for the act of irrigating/watering”. This might be our single mention in the ostraka of the local water-management; it seems safe to assume that the jars would be used with irrigation machinery, typically mounted on a water-lifting wheel (*sakiya*), the μηχαναί of Greek documents.

6 Lees (ἡ τρυγία or ἡ τρύξις) can mean both wine and olive oil lees (οἴνου τ. and ἐλαίου τ., resp.). Wine lees are by far more plausible given the simultaneous mention of new wine and it all being delivered to an *hēliastērion*.

7 My translation of καινοῦ as “of new wine” assumes (οἴνου) καινοῦ.

9 The last line usually contains a date or a signature. It first seemed to me that we could read a corrupted graecized form of the Latin *horrearius*, ὀριάριος (or ὀπριάριος), followed by a personal name starting with Ἄεν as for

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<sup>58</sup> See more under 4.2.5. For a discussion of the term *hēliastērion* and more references, see DZIERZBICKA, Wineries, and VANDORPE & CLARYSSE, Greek Winery (pp. 129–130 in particular), which is a commented edition of a Demotic deed of conveyance from Sebennytyos (*P. dem. Gieben* 2) where the Greek sellers use the word *h3ly3stryñ* and render it as feminine in gender.

Ἀενών (for Ἀηνών).<sup>59</sup> However, I came to see here a signature consisting of the name Hor (eventually an abbreviation for Ὅρος or Ὅριον – there could have been an abbreviation mark over the *rho*, now faded), followed by his occupation and a form of “write”. This interpretation is compelling given the commodities at stake; the proper name is well attested from the period’s documents, most frequently as Ὅρος, in any case a Greek form of the Egyptian god name *Hr* (Horus).<sup>60</sup> The only suspicion arises from the fact that the *rho* of κερα(μενς) seems to indicate an abbreviation which could give us reading Ὅρ κερα(μειον) α. This I do not find confirmative seeing the stroke across the *rho* as a continuous ligature from the bottom of *rho* to the following *alpha*. There seem to be traces of one letter erased or faded at the very start of the line – perhaps an *omega*, possibly corrected to the current *omicron*.

The reading of this last line makes the difference between a receipt and an account; In my view, we have an account of personal expenditures or outgoings.

## 2. Account (?)

Object No. 16.14/BS/07

Plate No. II

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no further coordinates recorded.

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<sup>59</sup> DARIS (*Lessico*, p. 78) has the lemma ὀππάρσιος with the sole reference to *P. Coll. Youtie* II 74. On the simplification of double consonants ρρ, one can refer to GIGNAC, *Grammar*, I, p. 156. *Horrearii* were assistants to a *praepositus* in civil or military granaries; they watched over and registered the incoming grain. On the official, see RICKMAN, *Roman Granaries*, pp. 176–182. In the later usage, however, the word does not necessarily imply granaries: cf. *LBG*, p. 1149b “Lagerverwalter”; SOPHOCLES, *Lexicon*, 819a (spelled ὀππάρσιος) “superintendent of stores in a monastery”.

<sup>60</sup> There is a securely attested but further unspecified Ὅριον in 50.1. This Horion is addressed “through the farmer” which suggests he might not be one himself but rather someone associated with “the farmer”; it is then conceivable that he is our potter.



Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 7.2 × 5.1 cm. Broken off at right-hand and left-hand side and possibly at top. Whitish surface dotted by black fungal spots, slightly stained.

Inscribed on the convex side only (possible traces on the concave side are not demonstrable), parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is cursive, fast, and experienced.

1 ἀπὸ Θῶθ αζ [ἐλαίου

2 ῥ]αφανίνου..[

3 ]. . κ. . . [

2 ο<sup>υ</sup>

“From Thōth 1 [ - - - ] of radish-[oil - - - ].”

1 The date corresponds to 29 August. There are traces of writing on the right-hand side between lines 1 and 2; they seem to form a raised *upsilon* on line 2.

2 We should expect commodities followed by a unit of measure; the unit might be the same as with other attestations of oil – *chous*, but cannot be identified in the murky faded area. This mention of radish-oil is the only one in the corpus; see discussion under 4.2.6.

The document might be a private account or memorandum.

### 3. Account of expenses (?)

Object Nos. 83.3/BS/07; 83.5/BS/07

Plate No. III

Late IV / early V.



The expenses for oil are lost – granted that this entry was also in money (one would then expect ὑπὲρ ἐλέου); but it might be rather in actual oil, in which case it is the volume and the unit of measure (most likely χοῦς) what is lost here.

The beneficiary is also lost, on the preceding line(s).

#### 4. (Ration) account (?)

Object No. 16.9/BS/07

Plate No. IV

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 11.6 × 7.8 cm. Broken off at the top.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. Salts are precipitated in the top right-hand side quadrant of the ostrakon, thus affecting readability of the three upper lines, while black fungal spots cover the sherd throughout the surface.

Hand looks rather unexperienced; the block letters script employs only one ligature, αι in καί; several spelling errors add to the impression of an unexperienced writer.

- 
- 1 ἀπὸ ιε ἐνδηκτίωνος . . χο . . μ . .
  - 2 καὶ κριθῆς μάτια . . T R A C E S
  - 3 καὶ ἀχύρου μανδάκια οα,
  - 4 καὶ φακὸν ἀρδάβ . . . .

1 read ἰνδικτίονος      4 read φακῶν    read ἀρτ-

“- - - from the 15(?) indiction, - - - and - - matia of barley - - - and 71(?) mandakia of chaff, and - - artabs of lentils.”

1 Only upper tips of about six first letters might be affected by the breakage at the top. Unread after the formula that brings us to the list can be one more commodity with its unit of measure and a number of quantity.

3 The measure is consistent with the other mentions of chaff transactions in our corpus, but the quantity is not clear – it is obscured by blotting and/or fungal spot; οα “71” is conceivable, a very substantial volume.

4 Of possible commodities starting with *phi* one could think of φοινίκων “of dates”, but matching it with the visible strokes is not convincing. But since the third letter of the word can be a *kappa*, φακῶν is more plausible (though not securely visible, it is printed with *omicron* due to the narrow space). After that, there might be a measure and volume. By comparison with the preceding lines we might expect the measure written out in full. The *delta* visible further to the right, then, would not be the volume (terminated with what looks like a double stroke Ϸ). Instead, I suggest to read ἀρδάβ... for ἀρτάβ... (the case depending on the number).

There seem to be more traces of writing below this line to the right-hand side of the potsherd; isolated *epsilon* and *omicron* are visible on the infra-red picture; we can expect it to be part of a date or signature.

## ***II. Memorandum (5)***

### **5. Memorandum (?)**

Object No. 272/BS/07

Plate No. V

Late IV / early V (402/3?).

From House 3, Room 11W, SU 6 (270 cm deep); 40 cm off S wall and 485 cm off W wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 19, 2007.

Preserved in 3 fragments that give a complete sherd. Combined dimensions 11.2 × 11.0 cm.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. The sherd was brushed and luster removed from most of the surface prior to writing. Minor damage to the text along the breakage lines, especially in the center of line 3.

Hand is semi-cursive and confident.

- 1 Π(αρά) τοῦ παγάρχου
- 2 Ἀπόλλων Θωνίου
- 3 λιτουρ(γῶ) χα(ίρειν). ἐλι[το]ύργησας
- 4 ἐπὶ τῆς α' ἰνδ(ικτίονος) ἑξαμήνου.
- 5 σεσημείωμαι.

1 Π -χο<sup>υ</sup>      2 read Ἀπόλλωνι or Ἀπολλωνίῳ      3 read λιτουρ( ) χ'  
read ἐλειτούργησας      4 -νο<sup>υ</sup>      5 read σεσημείωμαι

“From the *pagarch* to the *liturgist* Apollōn son of (Th)ōnios, greetings. You have performed your public duties for the period of six months in the first indiction. I have signed.”

There are no published examples of statements or notes written by high-ranking public officials in recognition of someone’s fulfilled liturgical services. The fact that ostrakon was used instead of papyrus only adds to the curiosity of the document.

1      Next to *O. Dor.* 5, **29** (and possibly **27**) below, this might be the earliest mention of a *pagarch* so far published. The name of the office

(*pagarchia*) appears first in the fourth century, but the officials were believed to appear much later. The present document, along with **29** (and possibly **27**) and *O. Dor.* 5.1 published earlier by WAGNER (*Oasis*, p. 103; dated to 407/408 or 422/423), brings us closer to the 4<sup>th</sup> century when the office of *pagarchia* first appears in the papyrological documentation. (see discussion under 4.3.1.).

The unspecified *pagarch* most probably was a city resident, while Apollōn was apparently a local, village liturgist; his residency in the village or hamlet of modern Bīr Shawīsh is further supported by the existence of more material bearing his name and excavated from the same house at this site (the name Ἀπολλῶς inscribed on two oil-lamps and a lid might be a contracted hypocoristic form of the name Ἀπολλώνιος, just like Apollōn is, and it might pertain to the same man, while the ostrakon **13** has the exact form Apollōn, also in dative).

2 Apollōn son of (Th)ōnios is identified here with a generic term *liturgist* rather than with a more specific term for whatever office he held. The purpose of the present document, it seems, is to prove his fulfilling a public liturgical service (a tax collection?). Indeed, after the administrative reforms of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, the civic *praepositi* (and later *pagarchoi*, with larger circumscriptions) were made responsible for collecting taxes in their respective *pagi* to which end they would appoint liturgists as their local agents.

Another evidence for the same person may be the two inscriptions on oil-lamps and one more on a lid, all of which were found in the same Room 11 (see under 3.2.2.), but these consistently read Apollōs. Since both Ἀπόλλων and Ἀπολλῶς are in fact endearing hypocoristic forms of Ἀπολλώνιος, I find it highly probable that they both designate the same person and were used indifferently. I would also find it improbable that under one roof there would live two men of some standing with almost identical names: a liturgist Apollōn and an Apollōs, who exercised control over local ceramic production or had his name incised on his lamps before firing. Indeed, it should be noted, that objects with the respective names ended up in the same stratigraphic layers after the house was abandoned.

As for the patronymic, the breakage and resulting chipping of the surface between the two names makes it a bit complicated to clearly see the beginning of the second name, but the traces available there suggest it is Thōnios, a name fairly common in the Oxyrhynchites and generally quite frequent also in the 4<sup>th</sup> century Egypt.

To conclude, I find the reading Ἀπόλλων(ι) Θωνίου is reasonably conceivable.

4        The terminal *upsilon* in ἑξαμήνου is raised so high above the line that it actually sits on line 3.

### ***III. Receipts (6–33)***

#### **6. Receipt for wheat**

Object No. 16.5/BS/07

Plate No. VI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 10.3 × 10.1 cm. Preserved complete or possibly broken off below and at the top right-hand corner; the breakage at the top apparently did not result in the loss of the text.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. The surface is covered with small black fungal dots and affected by precipitated salts.

Scribal hand is slow and diffident but fairly regular; the majuscule script with no ligatures is provided with minuscule forms of *alpha* and *mu*.

1 T R A C E S  
 2 T R A C E S ε οδ  
 3 ἐδεξάμην παρὰ σοῦ ὕ(πέρ)  
 4 φόρου ἔκκτης ἐνδικ(τίονος)  
 5 σίτου ἄρ(τάβας) ιγ, μ(άτια) λε.  
 6 T R A C E S  
 7 T R A C E S  
 8 [ό]μοίως ἐδεξάμην TRACES

3 read ἐδεξάμεν 4 read ἔκτης read ἰνδικ- 5 ἄρ Π ς μ ΛΕ ς 8 read  
 ἐδεξάμεν

“ - - -. I have received from you, for the rent for the sixth indiction, 13 artabas  
 and 35 matia of wheat. - - - I have also received - - -.”

1–2 The opening line(s), now almost completely faded, most probably  
 contained the address identifying the writer and the addressee, and the  
 expression of greetings. The beginning of line 2 may read Ἔκτωρ.

3 Were it not for the sense of the phrase, one would certainly disregard  
 the murky traces on the very edge of the pot-sherd. The actual contracted form  
 is purely tentative.

4 The only other example, in the PN, of the garbled form of “the sixth”  
 plus an “indiction” is *P. Charite* 3.6. “Indiction” with *epsilon* in the initial  
 position is also attested in *P. Oxy.* LX 4089.8, *Stud. Pal.* VIII 844.2, and our  
**7conv.5**, while *eta* in the central position occurs only in our **4**. Given the  
 space available and the lower stroke of the *kappa* seemingly descending, it is  
 probable it was abbreviated as indicated; the *kappa* stands at the edge of the  
 potsherd.



5        The resolution of  $\mu$  into  $\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\iota\alpha$  is more plausible than into  $\mu\omicron\delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  as it is the more common measure for wheat (and barley) and it occurs regularly with artaba. The relationship of matia to artaba is not obvious; mostly it was either 1/10 or 1/23 (see under 4.2.1.). It should be noted that, in either case, the relatively large number of matia was not converted to artaba(s); possibly for reasons dictated by the actual packaging of the grain.

### **7. Receipt for wheat**

Object Nos. 16.10/BS/07; 16.11/BS/07; 16.17/BS/07; 16.18/BS/07

Plate No. VII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Combined dimensions 15 × 12.7 cm. Broken off at the upper right-hand side (recently). Preserved in four pieces.

Inscribed on the convex and concave side, parallel with the throwing marks. A few letters on the concave side are on frg. 16.10/BS/07, located at the top of the fragment.

The scribal hand is rather irregular and difficult to read, though with little linking of letters.

#### **Concave**

End of 1 line of writing is preserved at the top (ca 5 letters):

-----  
]Ἰσάκ.  
-----

### Convex

- 1 Ἰ[σ]ίδωρος .[
- 2 ἐμέτρησ[ας
- 3 εἰς τὴν π[ ± 5 ] . . . . ουρ . . . .
- 4 καὶ πα . . . υ τῷ γεόχῳ Ἰσακ ὑπ[έρ]
- 5 φόρ(ου) β ἐνδ(ικτίονος) μο(δί...) [ . ] ἐταλικ[
- 6 σίτου . εχ . . . . . [
- 7 τοῦ μενὸς Παῦνι [

### Convex

3 ο<sup>υ</sup> 4 read γεούχῳ Ἰ 5 ρ ἐνδ μ read ἰταλ- 7 read μηνὸς

### Convex

“Isidorus - - - [you] have measured [and brought] in the [city - - -], and - - - to the landlord Isak for the rent for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (?) indiction, - - - *modii Italici* of wheat, - - - of the month of Pauni.”

### Concave

The *kappa* is followed by a character, which is apparently connected to it and looks like an *omega*; a reading grammatically difficult to accept. Reading of the name is supported by the occurrence of the same on the opposite side of the potsherd.

### Convex

1 The reading Ἰσίδωρος is not without reservations, but it is the most likely theophoric name of the -δωρος family, given the space restrictions and the two other occurrences of the name (17 and 34) both of which show the person as a dispatcher of agricultural products (cotton and chaff, respectively) and, therefore, likely a farmer. If he is the same person here, we may want to

see this document as a letter or note issued by him to inform the addressee of his transactions. Alternatively, this is a receipt and a third party (a middle-man) certifies his transaction. Accordingly, lost after the name could be a patronymic or a designation of an office or occupation (not present in either of the two other documents), or an addressee.

2        The actual verb form is not certain; as supplemented here, it assumes that the document is a receipt, but it could also read ἐμέτρησεν and refer to a third person introduced after the verb. I suppose Ἰσίδωρος be a middle-man issuing a receipt for a tenant farmer (his name lost) on behalf of his lord Isak.

The next line signals we might be dealing with a delivery to a place, hence a verb of delivery should be expected on this line, possibly connected by “and” to read, e.g., ἐμέτρησας καὶ ἐνέβαλες or ἐμέτρησεν καὶ ἐνέβαλεν (or ἐνεβάλετο, for that matter) “you have / [NN] has measured and delivered”. The document, then, might be a receipt for transport – the only of its kind within the corpus; or a tax receipt for a payment in kind.

3        Place of delivery starting with *pi* might follow the preserved words εἰς τὴν. While πλοῖον “boat” can be excluded as improbable in the desert environment, πόλις “city” is quite possible: εἰς τὴν π[όλιν]. The goods shipped might have followed on the same line.

4        Supporting evidence for the landlord Isak is **29**.

5        The *modii* signal grain, which is often not mentioned explicitly; the *sitos* on the following line may belong to it after all. The qualifier “Italian” is known from within the papyrological documentation only from *O. Douch* (III 220.5; 335.4–5; IV 397.5; and V 512; 565; 578; 583; 586; 627; consistently spelled as μ. ἡταλικά); for more, see 4.2.1.; the reading here is very difficult. The missing volume could stand on this line or the following. Alternatively, the unit is just *modii* followed by the volume written out in full, but to read πεντεκαίδεκα is similarly difficult.

6        Unread on this line could be the name of the person who wrote the document introduced by a form of σεσημείωμαι.

## 8. Receipt for land-tax payment in wheat

Object No. 216/BS/07

Plate No. VIII

July 6, 398 or 413

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 5 (140 cm deep); 70 cm off E wall, 130 cm off N wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 8, 2007.

Dimensions 10.5 × 8.2 cm; preserved in four fragments. The sherd is chipped off at top and below (recently), and possibly at top right. Surface damage along the breakage lines affects the readability of the text on line 4. Large black spots (fungal?) at left conceal the beginning of line 5.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

The scribal hand is semi-cursive, with a number of *sigla*.

- 1 Ψεγεπνοῦτις Ἡρακλείδῃ χα(ίρειν).
- 2 Ἐδεξάμην παρὰ σ{χ}οῦ ὑ(πὲρ) γεωρ(γίου) ἐν-
- 3 [κ]τῆσ(εων) Χαρις( ) ὑ(πὲρ) ια( σίτου ἀρτ.) βλ κδ καὶ ὑ(πὲρ)
- 4 πολ(ιτῶν) (σίτου ἀρτάβην) α μόνας. [ὁ] αὐτὸς σεσ[ημ(είωμαι).
- 5 Ἐ[πε]ῖφ ιβ ια( ἰνδι(κτίονος).

1 χ<sup>α</sup>      2 Y<sup>-</sup> γεωρ      3 Y<sup>-</sup> Ɱ      4 πολⱮ Ɱ      read μόνην      5 ἰνδι

“Psenepnoutis to Hērakleidēs, greetings. I have received from you for the farm in the register of landed property of Charis(?), for the 11<sup>th</sup> (indiction year): 2.5 and 1/24 artabas of wheat; and for the public land, 1 artaba of wheat only. I myself have signed. 12 Epeiph, 11<sup>th</sup> indiction.”

1      Maybe the only attestation of this form of the Christian name Psenpnouthis, lit. “The-son-of-the-God”.

2 Expression of greetings (χαίρειν) at the end of the opening, “address” line is customary; the sense of the text dictates that we read it here, although the traces are far from probative.

2–3 Γεώργιον “land plot, estate”. Cf. another receipt for land-tax in *O. Oslo* 27.2 (6<sup>th</sup> century).

3 Charis( ) might be a place name whose identity we do not know; the name does not appear in the earlier documentation from the Oasis.

The sinusoidal curve ( ) does not stand for ἔτους here; it is the sign simply marking a numeral, which must indicate the indiction year.

4 The person who signed might be Psenepnoutis.

## **9. Receipt for wheat**

Object No. 295/BS/07

Plate No. IX

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11, SU 3 (110 cm deep; by conjecture, as it was identified and recovered from among the pottery fragments that had been preselected for drawing documentation and grouped according to contexts in the course of the excavation); no coordinates available.

Found within the excavation of House 3, presumably between May 3 and 5, 2007, when the respective stratigraphic unit was under excavation; identified on May 22, 2007.

Dimensions 7.0 × 5.0 cm. Broken off at the left-hand side (?) and below.

Surface is soiled, dotted with fungal spots.

Inscribed on the convex side only; the surface is very smooth, without visible throwing marks.

Hand is semi-cursive.

- 1 Ἀπόλλων[ ] Ἰσάκ TRACES
- 2 . . ιτω . . . παρέλαβον . .
- 3 TRACES γε TRACES
- 4 χαρητ faded completely
- 5 (σίτου ἀρτ.) (ἥμισυ) χ(οίνικες) η . . . .[
- 6 σεση[μείωμαι

5 𐀓 𐀚

“Apollo (to) Isak (?) - - -. I have received - - - Chares (?) - - - 1/2 artaba and 8 *choinikes* of wheat. I have signed - - .”

- 2 We can expect “from NN”, but the text is too faded.
- 4 Personal name Chares?

### 10. Receipt for *sitokrithon*

Object No. 16.4/BS/07

Plate No. X

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 9.2 × 7.7 cm. Preserved complete; discolored.

Inscribed on convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

The scribal hand is not confident; the script is semi-cursive, irregular, with only a few ligatures.

- 1 Ῥουφῖνος . . . . . πρεσ(βύτερος)
- 2 Ἀβράμ Εἰακὼβ χ(αίρειν). ἔσχον

3 παρὰ σοῦ ὑπὲρ φόρου σι-  
 4 τουκριθῶν μάτια πέντε  
 5 εἰ μόνως.

2 read Ἀβραὰμ Ἰακώβ      3 second ρ descends to interfere with μ of μάτια on  
 line 4      3–4 read σι|τουκριθῶν      5 read μόνως

“The priest Rufinus (son of) - - - to Abraham son of Jacob, greetings. For the  
 rent, I have received from you five *matia* of *sitokrithon*, 5, no more.”

1      In the center of the line we might expect the patronymic of Rufinus.  
 Although there is no other mention of Rufinus within the corpus to confirm his  
 priestly status and the combination, after his name, of his priestly status and  
 (possibly) a patronymic would be rather unusual, the suggested reading of  
 “priest” is fairly confident.

2      Due to the numerous attestations of the name the identity of the man is  
 near to certain despite the unusual spellings that perhaps also include an *eta* in  
 the initial position in the stead of *alpha* in Ἀβραὰμ.

3      End of the line might contain a motif for the payment (φόρος “rent”,  
 e.g.) or the period for which the payment was due (typically, an indiction year)  
 or both, probably continuing over to the next line. The traces visible on the  
 potsherd allow for the reading as suggested but there are other possibilities,  
 including . . . | τοῦ κ. (to be emended to τῶν κ.).

3–4      The only previously published mention of *sitokrithon* from the Small  
 Oasis is *O. Bahria div. 9*, interpreted by the editor as being for the *annona*  
*militaris* (see, WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 106). Economically active priests are a fairly  
 common phenomenon of papyrological documentation (cf. also 15).

4      Up to the present, *mation* as a unit for measuring barley and *sitokrithon*  
 is solely attested in the documentation from Oasis Magna (Ain Waqfa, Kellis,  
 Kysis, and Trimithis). The number of *matia* is dotted through-out, but the

visible traces correspond well to the conceived πέντε, with a large *nu* and the final *epsilon* slightly below the line.

5 The numeral ε (5) only by conjecture to correspond to the same volume at the end of the preceding line.

### 11. Receipt for wheat, barley, and chickens

Object No. 83.6/BS/07

Plate No. XI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 8, SU 1; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions 8.9 × 4.8 cm. Broken off at the left-hand and right-hand side.

Inscribed on the convex side, parallel with the throwing marks. Possible traces of writing on the concave, but completely illegible.

Scribal hand is slow; the majuscule script with no ligatures is characteristic by prolonged strokes after *alphas* and *deltas*.

Convex

- 1 Θ]εώπεμπος Ἰσακ [ ± 4 ] χέριν.
- 2 ἐδ]εξάμην παρὰ σοῦ θ ἰνδικτίω[νος
- 3 ](σίτου ἀρτάβας) ιβλ μ(οδίους) β . . . . .
- 4 ]κριθῶν μ(άτ.) [ ± 4 ] ὄρ(νεα) β
- 5 ] . . . . [

1 read Θεόπεμπος Ἰ read read χείρειν 2 Θ 3 ⲧ̅ μ̅ 4 μ̅ ὄρ

“Theopemptos to Isak - - -, greetings. I have received from you, in the 9<sup>th</sup> indiction, 12 ½ *artabas* and 2 *modii* of wheat - - - [...] - - *matia* of barley, 2 chickens. [...]”



1        Only upper stroke of the first *epsilon* is preserved; it is followed by a clear *omega* and a very wide *psi*. The person issuing this document is Θεόπεμπος (for the correct Θεόπεμπος attested from the 5<sup>th</sup> century), attested also in 35.

The addressee's name is by no means certain and nothing convincing can be made up from what follows after; we could expect a status or occupation, such as γεώ(χ)ω (note that Isak is securely attested as a landlord elsewhere), but it cannot be excluded that it is a part of the name, which could be that of Isidoros.

2        Given the arrangement on line 2 and the space available on line 3, the indiction was likely divided to read ἰνδικτίω|νος.

4        The volume of barley seems to read ΙΓ Ϙ.

5        Only upper tips of a few letters are preserved.

## 12. Receipt for oil and wheat

Object No. 18/BS/05

Plate No. XII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 19 (formerly – in the field documentation before the 2007 season – Room 2), from within 0–50 cm above the floor (?), under the vault collapse; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, in November 2005.

Dimensions 12.9 × 10.1 cm. The ostrakon is complete – the lower corner of the sherd recently chipped, but it does not affect the completeness of the text recorded.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

The hand is cursive and reasonably legible, with only the closing formula somewhat squibbled.

- 1    Λαλάχιος ἐμέ-
- 2    τρησεν ἐλ(αίου) χό(ες) δ,
- 3    σέτου ἀρτ(άβας) γ θ' ἰνδ(ικτίονος)
- 4    ΜΕ Τ R A C E S δ σεση(μείωμαι).

2 ἐλ χ° Δ    3 read σίτου Γ Θ' Δ    4 η

“Lalakhios has measured 4 choes of oil, 3 artabas of wheat for the 9<sup>rd</sup> indiction, - - -. I have signed.”

1        For the very rare proper name Λαλάχιος, cf. *P.Mich.inv.* 4008 (= *SB* 22.15768) published in GAGOS & SIJPESTEIJN, *Settling a Dispute*, pp. 248–249; for substantial corrections to the edition and further discussion of the text, see BAGNALL, *Vineyard*, pp. 17–25. Though in actuality found in Oxyrhynchos, the papyrus, excitingly, relates to the Bahrīya Oasis since it is stated that the centurion Λαλάχιος involved in the *epinemesis* settlement recorded in *P.Mich.inv.* 4008 resides in the Oasis. He, however, must be a different person from our Λαλάχιος, since the Michigan papyrus is dated 364 CE.

1–2        One would expect specification of the product measured, for which the receipt was issued, come after the verb, followed by a (volume) measure and quantity expressed either in numerals, or written out in full; this in our case continues with another product on the following line. Whereas the large, distinct Δ at the end of line 2 is apparently the expression of quantity, the “oil” and “choes” are only poorly visible.

3        The beginning of the line is obscured by darkness running horizontally; it may or may not be traces of ink. The quantity (Γ “3”) is only the more plausible reading.

4        The name of whoever signed this receipt could either precede or follow the σεσημείωμαι “I have signed” closing phrase; eventually in the form of ἐγώ ... “I (myself) ...”. However, some documents do not contain a name,

as it might also be the case here, where the traces at the beginning of the line seem to give a date starting with Με as for Μεσορή (more likely than Μεχείρ); even then, ἐγώ is not entirely excluded, although unlikely, because the sequence before σηση( ) seems to end with a *delta* which would then signify the day of the month. It is not clear whether or where the month was abbreviated – the complete word could fit in the unread portion of the line.

### 13. Receipt for chaff

Object No. 64/BS/07

Plate No. XIII

405/406?

From House 3, Room 11, SU 3, fill of Niche 2; no further coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 3, 2007.

Dimensions 9.2 × 6.2 cm. Complete.

Inscribed on convex side only, obliquely to the throwing marks; the surface is, however, fine and smooth.

Hand is experienced, script semicursive, with a fair amount of linking of letters; dating formula in large letters.

- 1 Ἡρακλείδης Ἀπολλων.
- 2 ἐπαράσχεσ ὑπὲρ φόρου ἀχύρου
- 3 μανδ(άκια) β δύω. σησημείω(μαι)
- 4 ὑπὲρ δ ἰνδ(ικτίονος).

1 Ἀπολλων(ίω) or Ἀπόλλων(ι)?  
read σησημείωμαι

2 read παρέ- -ρο<sup>υ</sup> bis

3 read δύο

“Hēracleidēs to Apollōn. For the rent, you have given two *mandakia* of chaff. I have signed, for the 4<sup>th</sup> indiction.”

For another chaff receipt, see **34**, where, too, the measure is *mandakion*, though usually we find *drakhmai* or *litrai*. For the discussion of this measure, see 4.2.2.

1        The addressee’s name is most likely Apollōn and might be resolved to read Ἀπόλλων(ι); cf. the commentary on **5**, and under 4.3.2.

#### **14. Receipt for oil**

Object No. 16.6/BS/07

Plate No. XIV

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no further coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 8.1 × 7.5 cm. Sherd virtually complete; top part possibly chipped off. The surface heavily soiled; some fungal spots.

Inscribed on the convex side only, perpendicular to the throwing marks.

Hand does not look very experienced; writing is rather irregular, with few ligatures.

- 1    Πα[ . . . . . ] Ἀβρ[α]ὰμ Ἰακὼβ
- 2    χέρειν. T R A C E S   T R A C E S
- 3    παρὰ [σοῦ ὅ]πρ . . . . .
- 4    θ ἰνδίκτιωνος ἐλέου
- 5    χο(ὅς) α (ἥμισυ). σεση(μείωμαι) ὁ αὐτός.
- 6        T R A C E S

2 read χαίρειν      4  $\bar{\theta}$     read ἐλαίου      5  $\dot{X}$  Aζ

“Pa[ . . . ] to Abraham son of Jacob, greetings. [I have - - - - ] from [you f]or the - - - of the 9<sup>th</sup> indiction year, 1 ½ chous of oil. I myself have signed - - -.”

1            The sender’s name remains unread. It is possible there is γεωργός (or an abbreviation thereof) squeezed under “Jacob”.

2            The second part of the line might contain a verb, most likely a verb of receipt, such as ἐδεξάμην or παρέλαβον, the latter one likely to correspond with the traces.

3            The purpose of the payment in kind remains unread. The word seems to start with *lambda* or *chi* followed by *omicron* or *epsilon*; λειτουργ for λειτουργίας is possible.

4            This is one of three instances (besides **35** and, probably, **11**) within the corpus where “indiction” is written out in full; also “greetings” (line 2) are regularly abbreviated (another exception to this habit is **22**).

4            We see Abraham delivering olive oil also in **15** and **16**.

6            The last line may have contained the name or a date, but very indistinct traces is all there is left. One more line could have followed.

### 15. Receipt for oil

Object No. 16.21/BS/07

Plate No. XV

Late IV / early V (October 22, 397 or 412?).

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 13.9 × 7.2 cm. Broken off at lower left-hand side, with no apparent losses to the text.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is semi-cursive, not very experienced, with considerable irregularities, esp. in writing ρ and δ. *Upsilon* not only in terminal but also central position is always in superscript (6 times).

- 1 Θεὸν πρεσβ(ύτερος) Ἀβραὰμ Ἰακὼβ
- 2 γεορ(γῶ) χαίρει(ν). παρέσχες ὑπὲρ
- 3 φόρου δεκάτης ἰνδ(ικτίονος) τῷ πρεπο-
- 4 σίτῳ ἐκ πιττάκου σεοῦ γεούχῳ Ἰσὰκ
- 5 ἐλέου χό(ες) τρίς, γ μόνῃ. Φαῶφι
- 6 κε ια ἰνδι(κτίονος). ὁ αὐτὸς σεσημί(ωμαι).

1 -σβ Ἰακὼβ<sup>β</sup> 2 γεορ read γεορ(γῶ) -ρεῖ 3 φόρο<sup>ν</sup> ἰνδ<sup>λ</sup> 3-4  
 read πραιποσίτῳ 4 -κο<sup>ν</sup> read πιττακίου σεο<sup>ν</sup> γεο<sup>ν</sup>χῳ read σοῦ γεούχου  
 5 -ο<sup>ν</sup> read ἐλαίου χ̣ read τρεῖς read μόνους 6 ἰνδ<sup>λ</sup> αὐτὸς -μ̣  
 read σεσημί(ωμαι)

“Priest Theon to the farmer Abraham son of Jacob, greetings. For the rent for the tenth indiction, you have given to the *praepositus* from the *pittakion* of your landlord Isak, three *choes* of oil, 3 only. On the 25 Phaophi of the 11<sup>th</sup> indiction. I myself have signed.”

1 There is no way of knowing whether this Theon is the same from **25** where, with no mention of his priestly status, a Theon is identified as the son of Alexander; handwritings do not match, to say the least. It also does not become clear in what relationship this priest stands to the said *praepositus*; his issuing a receipt on behalf of the *praepositus* may suggest he was his agent in the transaction. His involvement in what appears to be private (and military?) business matters poses more general questions about the role of the members of clergy of the church in economic life. While the active engagement of clergy in late antique economy is a known fact, a Hibis ostrakon MMA X.608.7

(containing an order by the landlord Faustianus to the priest of Ptetou to disburse some oil) might further suggest that priests as agents of landlords could act *ex offio*, in their priestly capacity, as the priest in *MMA X.608.7* is only identified by a place name.<sup>62</sup>

3–4 The *πραιπόσιτος* might denote a military person rather than a *praepositus pagi*, a civilian liturgical official from the metropolitan curial class whose responsibility, after the introduction, in 303, of a new administrative system reporting to the *logistes*,<sup>63</sup> was to govern a *pagus* (a subdivision of a nome), to supervise the collection of taxes, and to appoint village officials. His name, however, does not appear here. In **29**, we find an Isak in relation to a *pagarchos*, another civilian official, after all; whether this Isak is the same person is not obvious.

“From the *pittakion*” must indicate the origin of the rent payment at stake, making it clear that the document is a receipt for a rent.

4 The descending tail on the *kappa* in *πιττάκου* would normally be taken to indicate iota, but after comparing it with other occurrences of *kappa* throughout the text (esp. in Isak on the same line) I prefer to take it as a peculiar way of writing simple *kappa*.

It would be more elegant to say τοῦ γεούχου σοῦ.

*Pittakion* can mean an agricultural firm, a consortium for agricultural work, a group of landowners jointly farming a body of land on lease (cf. BAGNALL, *Columbia Papyri VII*, p. 117, and BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 118). Such consortia were typically made up by an extended family household joined by persons from outside the family to jointly farm the land and pay taxes. While in Roman times the land would be leased from the state, with the rise of large landowners in later centuries farmers (*georgoi*) leased from and worked on land of *geouchoi*. In this text, Abraham would therefore appear to pay the

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<sup>62</sup> I owe this parallel to Roger Bagnall who kindly provided me with the manuscript of his preliminary edition of the Hibis ostraka (to be published in *ZPE*).

<sup>63</sup> The date is traditionally 307/308; for the revised date, cf. BAGNALL & RUFFINI, *Amheida I*, pp. 45–46.

collective liability on account of his consortium; would it make him a *pittakiarch*? A *pittakion* list would obviously aid our understanding of the personal and economic realities at play. The present text would be in fact the only instance where we would see Abraham associated with a *pittakion* and the only mention of a *pittakion* within the corpus in the same time. But it is quite possible that in the present context *pittakion* may just mean a receipt, as it denotes “(written) note” or “order” in *P. Mich. inv.* 3491 dated in the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century (TM 78937; see SIJPESTEIJN, *Small Texts*, pp. 118–119) or *P. Mich. inv.* 3425 dated in the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century (TM 79188; see SIJPESTEIJN, *Varia Papyrologica III*, p. 259).

## 16. Receipt for oil

Object No. 16.22/BS/07

Plate No. XVI

Late IV / early V (August 23, 398 or 413).

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 13.2 × 10.8 cm. Preserved complete.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is semi-cursive and confident.

- 1 . . . . π. Ἀβραὰμ Ἰακώβ γεοργῶ χα(ίρειν).
- 2 παρέσχες ὑ(πὲρ) ἔτου η ἐλέου χωέας
- 3 ἐν[ ± 7 ]. Μεσορὴ λ ια ἰνδι(κτίονος)
- 4 [ ± 10 ]τος τοῦ αὐτοῦ
- 5 T R A C E S

1 read γεοργῶ χ<sup>ν</sup> 2 Y<sup>-</sup> read ἔτους H<sup>-</sup> read ἐλαίου read χόες 3  
 ἰνδ<sub>L</sub> 4 Y<sup>-</sup>



“- - - to the tenant farmer Abraham son of Jacob, greetings. You have given, for the year 8, - - *choes* of oil. On the 30 Mesore of the 11<sup>th</sup> indiction. - - - him who - - - .”

1        The name of the issuing person is lost in the beginning of the line. The structure and contents of the document are similar to **15** where this person is a priest Theon; but although the restoration [Θέων] πρ(εσβύτερος) would fit into the lacuna, there is no other supporting evidence, while the hands on the both ostraka seem different.

2        The only other attested example, in PN, of ἔτου(ς) is a mummy label *SB I 5480* (i.e., C. Étiq. Mom. 472), dated I to IV.

The year 8 must be of the indiction cycle (394/5 or 409/410 CE). I prefer it to the alternative reading πγ “83”, which would be of the Oxyrhynchite era and would correspond to 406/407 CE. But when we correlate the date with the one on line 3, they are off by three years – the payment was in arrears.

The exact form χωέας is unattested in the published documentation. But it is a variation on a similarly unusual form of *choes*, χοέας as attested in *O. Trim.* I 299.7 and *P. Ryl.* IV 627.92–94 (Theophanes archive).

3        Lost in the lacuna is the number of *choes* of oil, but the space available would allow for more. As for the number, a restoration of ἐν[νέα] (nine) or ἑν[δεκα] (eleven) is feasible, possibly followed by μόνους “only” or even θ μόνους (or μόνας, as attested in other places) “9 only” to supplement the verbal expression of the number also by its respective numeral sign – a common practice attested also in other documents within the corpus, including **15**.

The date of 30 Mesore in the 11<sup>th</sup> indiction year (i.e., August 23, 398 or 413 CE) means that the payment was three years in arrears. We could also read 14, but that would create even bigger time gap.

4–5        “Who is illiterate” – ἀγραμμάτου?

5 Missing from the sentence is ἔγραψα and it might have stand here, however odd the syntax seems.

### 17. Receipt for cotton

Object No. 19/BS/05

Plate No. XVII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 19 (formerly – in the field documentation before the 2007 season – Room 2), undetermined fill by a pillar behind the staircase leading to the upper floor; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on Nov. 8, 2005.

Dimensions 12 × 11 cm. Broken off at top left, but this does not affect the completeness of the text recorded. Surface of the sherd is flaked, especially the back side, where also salts have precipitated.

Inscribed on convex side only, perpendicular to the throwing marks.

The hand is semi-cursive, without noticeable irregularities except for fairly wide *epsilon* at the beginning of line 3.

1 Τρωίλος Ἰσιδώρῳ  
2 χ(αίρειν).  
3 ἔδεξάμην παρὰ σοῦ  
4 ἔρε(ο)ξ(ύλου) λί(τρας) η  
5 ἰνδ(ικτίονος) ζ.

4 ἔρεξ λ H 5 ἰνδ

“Trōilos to Isidōros, greetings. I have received from you 8 pounds of cotton, in the 7<sup>th</sup> indiction.”

1–2 For the opening line, cf. **34** where the both individuals appear and the arrangement of the text is similar, with  $\chi$  also written as “hanging” from the terminal  $\omega$  in Ἰσιδῶρω.

4 The absence of the first *omikron* in ἐρεοξύλου is not entirely certain, as the letter may still stand squeezed at the lower end of the second ε.

Between the commodity (cotton) and what I believe is an expression of quantity (η “8”), we should expect a measure; damaged by flaking there seems to stand  $\lambda$  as  $\lambda\iota$  ( ). The identity of this unit in O. Bir Sh. remains uncertain, as it is always abbreviated. While the comparative textual material from the Great Oasis (Kysis, Kellis, Trimithis) and the recent scholarship on the subject suggest that *lithos* “stone” or its diminutive, *lithion*, is meant in the Great Oasis, our evidence more likely supports the reading *litrai* “pounds” in O. Bir Sh. See the similar case of **18** and the full discussion under 4.2.7.

5 No traces of text are visible before  $\iota\nu\delta$  to suggest there was a number identifying the indiction year. At the same time, there is an oddly shaped  $\zeta$  after  $\iota\nu\delta$  at the end of the line; it is reminiscent of a sign typically following a numeral, but as there is no better interpretation, it must stand for “seven” and identify the indiction at stake.

### **18. Receipt for cotton**

Object No. 16.7/BS/07

Plate No. XVIII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 13.7 × 5.9 cm. Complete. Surface of the sherd shows remains of original plaster (?) coating in left and right upper corners and lower right corner, along with black blotting caused by fungal infestation. Text was inscribed over the patches of coating and has suffered no loss through possible flaking of the coating.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. Text is unevenly faded, leaving especially the central part obscured.

Hand is semi-cursive, well legible.

- 1 Παπνοῦθις πρ(εσβύτερος) Ἀβραὰμ γεωργῶ
- 2 χέρ(ειν). ἐμέτρεσας εἰς τὸ γεουχ(ικὸν) μ[έρ(ος)
- 3 ὑπὲρ . . . . . γ( ) τω[ . . ] γενήματος . .
- 4 ιδ= ἰνδικ(τίονος) . . . . . Ἰσὰκ . .
- 5 ἐρεοξ-ύ'(λου) λί(τρας) δ= . ἐγὼ Μ . . . ω . . Ἑρφβ . . .
- 6 ἔγραψα ὑ(πὲρ) αὐτοῦ γράμματα
- 7 μὴ εἰδότος.

1 read γεωργῶ πρ 2 χέρ read χαίρειν read ἐμέτρη- 4 ΙΔ= ἰνδικ  
K 5 λ Δ= 6 υ<sub>ι</sub>

“The priest Papnouthis to the farmer Abraham, greetings. You have measured for the landlord’s share - - - for the 14<sup>th</sup> indiction, - - - 4 pounds of cotton. I, - - son of Herfb..., have written on his behalf, because he does not know letters.”

Being one of five ostraka within this corpus mentioning cotton, this document attests to the important place of cotton production in the economy of Egyptian oases. First suggested by BAGNALL (*SB* 6.9025), this role has been recently asserted in GRADEL, LETELLIER, & TALLET, *Coton*. For the discussion and review of all attestations of cotton within the ostraka from Bīr Shawīsh, see 4.2.7 below. The only other mention, to date, of cotton in the papyrological documentation concerning the Small Oasis is probably *P. Mich. inv.* 3630 (i.e., *SB* VI 9025), as convincingly argued by BAGNALL (*SB* 6.9025).

1 It seems highly probable that Abraham is the same the tenant farmer that is further specified on a number of other ostraka as the son of Jacob.

2        The landlord's share refers to fiscal shares of outgoing payments to one's landlord (γεῶχος). See under 4.3.2.

5        λι( ) must be a unit of weight for measuring cotton; like in the similar case of **17**, it is more likely *litrai* "pounds" than *lithoi* "stones". See the full discussion under 4.2.7.

The end of the line should contain the name of the literate person who wrote the text on behalf of the priest Papnouthis. The space would allow for a personal name followed by a patronymic. While of the first name we have only an uncertain initial, the patronymic is probably a variant form of Harpbekis (Ἀρπβήκις; "Horus-the-falcon"; only 3 individuals are known, dated to the second and third century), which is mostly attested as Ἀρβήχης, but only to the mid-third century. In our case we might have Ἐρφβήκις (Ἐρφβήκιος, in gen.), otherwise attested only once (*P. Ryl. Gr.* II 220; dated 134–138).

### **19. Receipt for cotton**

Object Nos. 45/BS/07; 244/BS/07

Plate No. XIX

Late IV / early V.

Preserved in 2 pieces. Breakage is recent, but the archaeological context of the two fragments as recorded in the field documentation is conflicting. Thus,

#### **45/BS/07**

From House 3, Room 12, SU 2 (140 cm deep), by the S niche; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 2, 2007.

Broken off at the right-hand side and at bottom.

#### **244/BS/07**

From House 3, Room 11W, SU 5 (200 cm deep), 440 cm off the W wall, 110 cm off the S wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 12, 2007.

Broken at top and right-hand side.

Combined dimensions  $4.9 \times 5.1$  cm. Broken off at the right-hand side and at bottom.

Inscribed on convex, smooth side only.

Scribal hand is very confident and elegant, with frequent ligatures.

Previous publication: *Actes du 26<sup>e</sup> Congrès*, pp. 195–196.

- 1 Ἰλάρω Ἀ[βραὰμ]
- 2 Ἰακῶβ γ[εωργῶ]
- 3 δεσποίνης χ[αίρειν.]
- 4 ἔσχων παρ[ὰ σοῦ (ὑπὲρ) ]
- 5 ἰνδι(κτίονος) ἐρε[οξύλ(ου) ]
- 6 ] ι [ ± 4 ]. [

- - - - -

1 read Ἰλαρος      4 read ἔσχον      5 ι

“Hilaros to Abraham son of Jacob, a tenant farmer of the lady landowner, greetings. [(For) the - - ] indiction, I have received from you - - - of cotton [- - - -].”

Although Room 12 in the documentation is the same as Room 11W, the stratigraphical information recorded during the excavation makes one pause.

1–2      Although the text would make sense without emendations, I opt for emending the first name to read it in the nominative case because I believe Hilaros is the issuer of the receipt. Within the corpus, we see Abraham son of Jacob pay in kind and receive documents, but issue none.

The name of the second person is restored with a good deal of confidence due to other eight secure attestations of that individual within the

corpus; in one of the cases (22), Abraham son of Jacob is also identified as a tenant farmer of a female landowner.

3 The precise phrase “farmer of the lady (landowner)” does not, to my knowledge, occur in papyrological documentation so far available (as searched through *PN*). Based on one other attestation of the word in 22, it is unlikely that there is *oiko-* lost at the end of line 2. Within our text corpus, we seem to have only one female landowner attested;<sup>64</sup> she appears here and in 22 and is always connected to Abraham son of Jacob. This is not to say that land owning women were seldom by any means in late antique Egypt, as they are believed to constitute between 1/6 and 1/4 of landowners in the third century (see BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 130). However, the fact that Abraham does here and in 22 explicitly state his connection to a female landowner on top of routinely calling himself a γεωργός (itself a denomination of a “tenant farmer”) prompts some questions. More on this, see under 4.3.2.

4 The indiction year for which the payment was done is lost at the very end of the line.

5 “Cotton” was almost certainly abbreviated; here typed only tentatively. After it, a measure and volume followed, possibly continuing on the next line.

6 Only upper tips of two letters are preserved above the breakage line. The first is probably a *iōta* and could be (a part of) a volume or a date; the second one looks very much like the *alpha* on line 1 or the *beta* on line 2, and it could represent the day (1 or 11 or 21).

## **20. Receipt involving a tunic and cotton**

Object No. 94/BS/07

Plate No. XX

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 2, SU 1 (40 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

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<sup>64</sup> The Ἰρήνη in 1 could be another one.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions 8.1 × 7.4 cm. Broken off at left-hand side; breakage looks recent.

As a result, as much as a half of the ostrakon is apparently missing.

Inscribed on concave and, possibly, convex side, parallel with the throwing marks.

The script is semi-cursive, distinctive for its ε and ligatures thereof with ο.

#### Concave

- 1 Τ]ιμοθέου ἀγροφ(ύλακος) χα(ίρειν).
- 2 ]το στιχάριν ἐρόγ(ευσας) ἐκ κέλλ(ης)
- 3 γ]εοῦχου ἐρεοξύλ(ου)
- 4 ]σι μόνας.
- 5 Ἐ]πείφι κηϵ.

#### Convex

Very faint traces of 6 to 8 lines of writing; possibly inverted 180 degrees. No text could be recovered.

#### Concave

1 O<sup>Y</sup> ϕ X<sup>A</sup> 2 read στιχάριον λ<sup>λ</sup> 3 ο<sup>ο</sup> 5 read Ἐπείφ KHϵ

#### Concave

“- - of Timothy the field guard, greetings. - - a variegated tunic - - You have distributed from the store-room - - - of the landlord; - - of cotton, - -, no more. - - 28 Epeiph.”

Concave 1 Timothy the field-guard might be the same person as in **22**, while the identity of the issuing party is lost in the lacuna.

As for the consignee and addressee of this document, it is most likely someone related to Timothy and defined by this relationship (hence the



genitive) – either his son, in which case Timothy would be the patronymic, or his heirs, which I assumed here because it is more plausible due to the parallel case of 22 where, however, the heirs of Timothy are, conclusively, the issuing party, and because the occupation of “field-guard” should belong to Timothy himself. Given the case sloppiness we often encounter in documentary texts, it is not impossible that the receiver of this document is in fact Timothy himself, in which case the word case ought to be emended to the dative to read Τιμοθέω and the following abbreviation resolved as ἀγροφ(ύλακι). In either case, Timothy or the people associated with him are the recipients.

The issuer (in the *nominative*) of this receipt might have stood at the start in the lacuna; the resulting syntactical structure being the most common “A to B”.

Concave 2            Tò might be the article.

The verb that I take as a form of ῥογέω poses several problems: there is no sign of abbreviation; there is no other verb going with it (such as ἔσχον); the only published pre-sixth century occurrences of the verb are in the Great Oasis, in Douch (*O. Douch* II 61.2; 83.1-2; 101.3; 163.6), where it appears in a clearly military context in the phrase ἔσχον καὶ ἐρόγευσσα (except in 163.6 where only ἐρόγευσσα is secure). For the discussion of the meaning, see 4.6.2. Our present document is a receipt; and even though there is no sign of abbreviation, ἐρόγ(ευσας) “you have distributed” (or ἐρογ(εύσατε), in plural), seems to be the only reasonable reading. The absence of a verb of receiving (such as ἔσχον in *O. Douch* II) ought not to be confusing, as the distributor took the stuffs ἐκ κέλλ(ης) “from the store-room”.

Concave 3–4        If a volume of cotton is part of this transaction we can expect ἐρεοξύλου | λι( ) .... Alternatively, the unit followed on the same line but is now completely faded.

Concave 4            Surely a number should be expected before μόνας. The reading of σι can give us either a numeral (210) or the end of a written-out number (εἴκο]σι “twenty“, e.g.). The latter is by far the most convincing given the volume.

Concave 5            The date translates to July 22. The indiction or era year might be lost on this line further to the left.

## 21. Receipt for cotton and dates

Object No. 102.1/BS/07

Plate No. XXI

399/400?

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 4 (180 cm deep); 20 cm off the E and 30 cm off the S wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions 8.3 × 9.1 cm. Fragment **33** most probably does not belong to this one. Broken at the left-hand side and at the top and bottom right-hand side. Black fungal spots cover most of the sherd; stains of dirt in the center of the sherd were partially removed by a conservator.

Inscribed on the convex side only (very smooth), parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is semi-cursive, with a limited number of ligatures. Indeed, the word φοινικίων is written entirely in block letters.

1    Ἰ[σὰ]κ Ἀβραὰμ Ἐ[ιακὼβ

2                            γεορ[γῶ

3    χ]έρει(ν). . . . .[

4        ]. ἐρεοξ(ύλου) . . .[

5        ]. φοινικίων . .[

6        ]. ιγ ἰνδι(κτίονος) . .[

7        σε]σιμείωμαι

1 read Ἰακὼβ

2 read γεοργῶ

3 ρ    read χαίρει(ν)

5 second ι

remade from ο

6 ΙΓ    ἰνδ

7 read σεσημείωμαι

“ - - - to the farmer Abraham (son of Jacob), greetings. - - - - of cotton, - - - - of dates. - - of the 13<sup>th</sup> indiction. I have signed.”

1        The issuing person can be Isak who also appears in **29**; thus Ἰ[σὰ]κ. The two documents are written in two different hands, but that is not probative, as a high official or rich landowner would not have done all of his own writing.

2        From the extent of the text apparently lost due to physical damage to the potsherd in line 1 can be concluded that, unless the greetings we expect in the lacuna of line 2 were reduced to simple *khi*, these would follow on line 3. Indeed, χαίρ]ει(v) is a possible restoration.

3        We should expect a verb to follow the greetings and take us *in medias res*. The large initial letter looks remade and could be a *pi* starting παρέσχες; but even though the first three or four letters are not all that bad, it is difficult to convincingly match the word with the strokes.

3–4      The purpose of payment would fit in the remaining space.

4        Neither unit nor quantity of cotton were recovered from this line where only some faint traces are visible – possibly ι “10” in the far right for the volume?; it is also possible that these continued on line 5 and are now lost due to the breakage of the potsherd.

5        Similarly neither unit nor quantity of dates is preserved; no traces are visible on line 6 either.

6        The most likely date for the 13<sup>th</sup> indiction is 399/400.

7        Perhaps αὐτὸς | σε]σῆμῖ(ωμαι) “I myself signed”? For similar misspelling see *O. Stras.* I 476 and *P. Flor.* III 298.6, 71, 73. *P. Bagnall* 52.4 has σαισιμῖωμαι.

## **22. Receipt for a piglet**

Object No. 43/BS/07

Plate No. XXII

Late IV / early V (19 May 402?).

From House 3, Room 12, SU 2 (140 cm deep), by the niche in S wall; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 2, 2007.

Dimensions 9.8 × 9.8 cm. Complete. Heavily blotted in the center – infested by fungi; professional intervention of a conservator in May 2009.

Inscribed on convex side solely, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is semicursive, well legible.

- 1 Κληρωνόμων Τιμοθέω ἀγροφ(ύλακος)
- 2 Ἀβραὰμ Ἰακώβ γεωργῶ δεσποί-
- 3 νης χέρειν. ἐπαρέσχεσ μοι (ὑπὲρ)
- 4 ιβ ἰνδικ(τίονος) δε[λ]φακίων α
- 5 μόνα. Παχὼν κδ
- 6 ιε ἰνδικ(τίονος).

1 read Κληρονόμοι Τιμοθέου ἀγροφ 3 read χαίρειν read παρέσχεσ V  
4 ἰνδικ read δελφάκιον 5 read μόνον ΚΔ 6 IE ἰνδικ

“The heirs of Timothy the field-guard to Abraham son of Jacob the farmer of the lady landowner, greetings. For the 12<sup>th</sup> indiction, you have given me one piglet, no more. On 24 Pakhon, (the year of) the 15<sup>th</sup> indiction.”

Heirs, who apparently inherited claims of their predecessor, are receiving a payment three years behind the schedule; we can infer they had not yet divided their inheritance. The absence of the heirs’ names further underlines the fact that they are acting as an entity and not as themselves or as individuals. This latter aspect makes the reading κληρον(όμοις) ἀγρο(φύλακος) in *P. Bingen* 116.2 even more convincing (see the discussion of the suggested restoration in MELAERTS, *Papyri*, pp. 475–476).

If the referenced payment was Timothy's wages for services (related to his title?) provided in the 12<sup>th</sup> indiction – of which there is no way of telling – it would mean that Timothy was still alive by that year; it would also provide the *post quem* for his death and help date **20** and **36** between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> indiction of the same cycle.

1 For another attestation of the same occupation of field-guard and, probably, even the same individual, see **20.1** and **36**. For the official, see the discussion under 4.3.3.

2–3 For the female landlord, see above **19** and the discussion under 4.3.2.

3 The  $\mu\omicron\iota$  seems to conflict the plural of the “heirs” on line 1. One can, however, imagine that one concrete person (hence, singular) acted in the name of the group of heirs or that the one person actually doing the writing for the group naturally switched to singular.

4 For another “piglet” (a χοιροδελφάκιον, though), see **42**.

### 23. Receipt for chicken and eggs

Object No.: 16.3/BS/07

Plate No.: XXIII

409/410 or 394/395

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 11.4 × 7.6 cm. Complete, but the left-hand side recently damaged.

Inscribed on concave side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Scribal hand is slow but regular, mostly block letters.

Previously published in: *Ostrový zapomnění*, p. 305; *Actes du 26<sup>e</sup> Congrès*, pp. 195–196.

1 [Ἰ]ωσήφ Ἀβραὰμ χέρ(ειν).

2 ἔσχων παρὰ σοῦ

3 ὄρ(νεον) α ὠὰ ι  
4 η ἰνδικ(τίονος).

1 read χαίρ(ειν)    2 read ἔσχον    3 ὄρ    ἱ

“Joseph to Abraham, greetings. I have received from you one chicken and ten eggs, (for) the (year of the) 8<sup>th</sup> indiction.”

For a similar text, cf. *O. Bahria* 2 and **25**. Referring to *P. Warren* 7, Lallemand had suggested (*Administration*, 195) that the payments in chickens and eggs could be a kind of a tax; the following item **25**, however, relates the payment explicitly to rent which makes me assume that the same might be the case also in this and other cases.

3        The resolution of ὄρ( ) is due to the two instances within our corpus where the word is written out in full. For a discussion, refer to 4.2.9. below.

#### **24. Receipt for chickens and eggs**

Object No. 16.20/BS/07

Plate No. XIV

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 12.8 × 11.6 cm. Preserved complete. The surface of the sherd is critically dotted with black fungal spots; soils precipitated in the upper right-hand corner; the left-hand side is mechanically abraded (recent). Surface slip lost at most of the sherd; the writing was apparently executed afterwards.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

The scribal hand is fast and confident; the script is semi-cursive.

- 1 Θ...π.....λεξ T R A C E S
- 2 λειτουργῶ χα(ίρειν). ἐδέξαμεν παρὰ σοῦ εἰς
- 3 τὴν διετίαν τῶν ἀργ T R A C E S
- 4 τοῦ ἐστὶν ὄρ(νεα) γ< ὡὰ δέκα π. ....
- 5 Ἐπεῖφ κ ιγ ἰγ[δικ(τίονος)]

2 read λειτουργῶ χ<sup>a</sup> read ἐδεξάμην 4 ο<sup>b</sup> ρ Γ<

“Th... - - - to the liturgist - - -, greetings. I have received from you, for the two-year period of - - -, - - is 3 chickens, ten (?) eggs - - - on the 20 Epeiph of the 13<sup>th</sup> (?) indiction.”

1 The name is very faded; the visible traces could correspond to Θεόπεμπος (likely Θεώ...) whom we know as an issuer of two or three more documents within the corpus. Following his name could be the addressee, possibly Alexander, who would then be the liturgist mentioned on the following line. The space available on line 1 allows for more than just the addressee’s name; a patronymic?

2 Terminal *nu* of ἐδέξαμεν looks remade; what follows is very murky and could eventually read π(αρὰ) σοῦ, with εἰς after it entirely obscured.

3 The second half of the line (continuing to the beginning of the next line) might contain a specification of the two-year period of time, but any attempts to read this faded and obscured section have failed. One could expect numerals designating the indiction years at stake – πρῶτ- or τρίτ- is conceivable. Alternatively, it could contain a part of the transaction; ἀργυρ- is possible.

4 The traces after “ten” may in fact be part of the same number; it is possible to read δεκαπέντε “fifteen”.

5 There is a vertical stroke squiggled descending about 4 cm below the current line from the area behind our ιγ; it seems that it goes continuously from

the *gamma* – it goes up creating a *iota*, then it loops to the left and descends slightly curved deep below the line.

Possibly more faded writing on the following line.

## 25. Receipt for chicken and eggs

Object No. 32/BS/07

Plate No. XXV

August 26, 392 or 407.

From House 3, Room 12 (by the S wall, 155 cm off the W wall), SU 2 (120 cm deep).

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 1, 2007.

Dimensions 6.9 × 7.7 cm. Broken off at all sides except, perhaps, bottom right-hand and upper left-hand side.

Inscribed on convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Scribal hand is similar to **19**, confident with usual ligatures involving ε, α, and ω.

- 1 Θέων Ἀλεξ[άνδρου διὰ]
- 2 Ἰωσήφ Σαρ( ) Ἀβρ[αὰμ]
- 3 Ἰακώβ γεοργῶ χέ[ρειν].
- 4 ἔσχων παρὰ σοῦ[
- 5 ὑπὲρ εἰνδι(κτίονος) ὄρ(νεον) αὐτὰ
- 6 ]δέκα. ἐπαγομ(ένων)
- 7 ]γ σεσ[ημείωμαι]

2 ρ    3 read γεοργῶ    read χαίρειν    4 read ἔσχων    5 εἰνδι    ὄρ    7 Γ



“Theon son of Alex[ander through] Joseph son of Sar( ) to the farmer Abr[aham] son of Jakob, greetings. For the 5<sup>th</sup> indiction, I have received from you one chicken and ten eggs. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> (?) of the epagomenal days, I signed.”

2 Of the possible patronymics, one can think of Σαράμμωνος, Σαρμάτου, Σαραπίωνος or Σαραπαμμῶνος. It should be noted that there is a Σαραπάμων attested in a dipinto on I. Bir Sh. 1. However, it is not impossible to read Συρ( ) instead.

5 After considering the month, the indiction year the payment is due for might be 392 or 407.

6 It is almost certain that the space available at the beginning of the line could not allow for a compound number – ἑνδεκα (eleven) or δώδεκα (twelve), since a broad *delta* would easily fill the space aligning the line with the rest of the text. It should also be noted that other texts containing a payment in chickens and eggs always have ten and just ten eggs.

6–7 The Oxyrhynchites has 1 Thoth as the beginning of the year, and one can suppose that the Small Oasis follows the Oxyrhynchites in this too. See the discussion under 4.1.1.

7 There is no text missing at the beginning of the line. The numeral with a supralinear stroke is convincingly the day within the month. It is not possible to tell how much of the word σεσ[ημείωμα] was originally there; it was almost certainly abbreviated.

## **26. Receipt for chicken and eggs**

Object No. 56/BS/07

Plate No. XXVI

386/387 or 401/402

From House 3, Room 11 (210 cm off E wall, 95 cm off S wall), SU 3 (110 cm deep).

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 3, 2007.

Dimensions 14.8 × 6.7 cm. Possibly broken off at the bottom of the convex side, with no loss to the writing.

Inscribed on both sides, approximately perpendicular to the throwing marks; with the concave side extremely faded.

Hand is semi-cursive.

#### Convex

- 1 Ἡλ[ ± 4 ] Ἰακώβ[?] πρ(εσβυτέρω) χαί(ρειν).
- 2 ἔσχον παρὰ σοῦ εἰς λόγ(ον)
- 3 Ἐκτωρο(ς) ὑ(πὲρ) τῆς ιεῖς ἰνδικ(τίονος)
- 4 ὄρ(νεον) ἔν, ὥὰ δέκα μόνα.
- 5 σεσημί(ωμαι).

#### Concave

Very faint traces of 3 or 4 lines of writing, as if erased; inverted 180 degrees (?). No distinct letters were recovered.

Convex 1  $\tilde{\text{I}}$   $\text{P}$   $\text{xal}$  2  $\Gamma'$  3  $\text{Y}^-$  or Ἐκτωρος  $\text{IE}$  4  $\text{P}$  5  $\text{J}$   
read σεσημείωμαι

Convex: “Ἐλ- - to the priest Jacob, greetings! I have received from you for account of Hector, for the 15th indiction, one chicken and ten eggs, no more. I signed.”

Convex 1        Second half of the name of the recipient of the payment at stake who is also the issuing person of this receipt is lost in the lacuna at the beginning of the line, but the possibilities attested in the fourth- and fifth-century documents include only Ἡλίας (attested 16-times in the fourth and fifth centuries in TM People) and its orthographic variants.

Due to surface damage to the sherd, the spacing of the restored letters in the middle of the line cannot be established with any certainty. This damage includes (1) a surface vertical crack that seems to follow the throwing marks, (2) an inprint, on the surface, of a straw or other “impurity” mixed into the potter’s clay possibly as a temper, and (3) a large black blot extending from around and after β in Ἰακὼβ down to the following line. With the first two elements likely to predate the writing, these material properties leave it open whether there were originally more letters between Ἰακὼβ (read with some confidence) and Ϙ, rendering also the resolution of πρ(εσβυτέρῳ) questionable.

The Ϙ used here is the very same one as on line 4.

**Convex 2–3** Ink blots before λογ( ).

I do not recognize the stroke continuously coming out and up of Γ as a raised iota but rather as a general marking of a contraction and I prefer to restore and resolve this passage to read εἰς λόγ(ον) “for / on account of”. In this case, the Jacob’s payment in kind was made “on account of Hector” through Ἐλ[...].

Ἐκτωρο(ς) is a sound resolution in either case, though remarkably rare a name, as there are no attestations of it in documentary texts after 100 CE. We might take it as an example of archaizing tendencies in the Roman-period oases, as remarked by O. KAPER (Oases, pp. 726, 729) and discussed below (see under 4.4).

**Convex 4** Unlike in the two preceding cases where quantities were expressed by the means of numerals or their combination with a full verbal expression, respectively, the present scribe opted for strictly verbal expression.

**Convex 5** Person who signed is Ἐλ[...] from the line 1, who, however, did not give his name here.

## **27. Receipt for chicken and eggs**

Object No. 81/BS/07

Plate No. XXVII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 3 (140 cm deep, by comparison with other finds); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions 8 × 6 cm. Complete? A layer of ceramic material is chipped off in the upper right-hand corner of the sherd.

Inscribed on the convex side only, perpendicular to the throwing marks; the surface is so smooth that the throwing marks are not easily apparent. Large parts of the sherd are soiled and blotted concealing thus the writing in dark brown ink.

Hand is fast, semi-cursive.

1 Ἰσακ πάγαρχ(χος) Ἀβραὰμ Εἰακὼβ  
2 γε]ωρ(γῶ) χαίρειν. VACAT  
3 T R A C E S . . . βς  
4 τήν T R A C E S ὀρνέων ἔν  
5 κ[αὶ] ὥα ι δέκα μόνας.  
6 Φ[αω]φί κ τῆς ιβ ἰνδικ(τίονος).

1 ρ 2 ρ read γεωρ(γῶ) 4 read ὀρνεον 6 ἰνδικ

“[Pagarch Isa]k to [the farmer] Abraham son of Jacob, greetings. - - - one chicken and 10, ten, eggs only. On the 20 Phaophi of the 13<sup>th</sup> indiction.”

2 It is difficult to see how this line aligns with the next. I prefer to understand the arrangement in the way that this line is a half-line to contain only the opening address phrase which ends with χαίρειν, probably written out in full.

3 Faired on this line might be specification of the transaction at stake – whether it is a receipt, or order. By comparison with other texts that mention

delivery of chickens and eggs we might expect that this, too, is a receipt. The end of the line may read εἰδέος (for ἡδέως).

4 Its reading near to certain, this is so far only a second occurrence, in the documentation from the Small Oasis, of the “chicken” spelled out in full, giving thus full credibility to the assumption first made by WAGNER (*Oasis*, p. 105 [ad *O. Bahria div.* 4] and 277) that the mentions of ὄρ( ) in the Baḥrīya texts represent ὄρνεα rather than ὄρνίθια. While this here is a definite proof, it is not clear whether the Wagner’s assumption – verbalized in his commentary on *O. Bahria div.* 4 – was made on the simple occurrence, in that ostrakon, of chickens (as ὄρνεα) side by side with eggs, and what role in that assumption plays Wagner’s reference on a different occasion (*Oasis*, 277) to the Lallemand’s note on the ὄρνεα καὶ ὠὰ tax and receipts thereof.

## **28. Receipt for chicken and eggs**

Object No. 296/BS/07

Plate No. XXVIII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 2 (by conjecture, as it was identified among the pottery fragments that had been preselected for drawing documentation and grouped according to SUs in the course of the excavation); no coordinates recorded.

Originated from the excavation of House 3, on May 23, 2007.

Dimensions 7.1 × 6.5. Broken at all sides (recent).

Inscribed on convex side only, parallel to the throwing marks (hardly discernible).

Hand looks experienced and confident; the script is semi-cursive, with the day numbers given in large print letters and τῆς squibbled.

1 ] ν.ρ [

2 ] ὅρ(νεον) α ὠὰ ι . . . [

3 Π]αῦνι κδ τῆ(ς) γς ἰνδι(κτίονος) [

Line 2: “ [ - - ] one chicken, ten (?) eggs ... [ - - ]”.

1 Assuming that this piece is a receipt for chicken and eggs and that it conforms to the layout attested on receipts presented above, lost by breakage at the top are names of a payer and a recipient, as well as the statement of purpose of this receipt. The two components most probably occupied two separate lines of text, which means that there might be one more line missing at the top of the sherd thus making it a 4-line document.

## 29. Receipt

Plate No. XXIX

From House 3, Room 12, by the S niche; no further coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 2, 2007.

Dimensions  $9.6 \times 8.2$  cm. Possibly broken off at upper right-hand side; surface of lower right-hand corner chipped off recently.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is cursive and confident, with curly ligatures.

- 1 Ἰσὰκ πάγαρχος . . [
- 2 Ἀβραὰμ Ἰακώβ γε[ωργῶ]
- 3 χέρ(ειν). ἐδεξάμ(ην) παρὰ σοῦ] ὑπ[έρ]
- 4 . . . ντῆς ἰν(δικτίονος) π[ ± 6 ]πτὰ
- 5 TRACES τοῦ ἱβ. ἔτους μεχ [

3 read χαίρ( )      4 ἰν

“Isak, *pagarch* (of) - - , to the farmer Abraham son of Jacob, greetings. I have received from (you) for the - - indiction, - - -. In the year 12 (?), - - .”

1        One might expect a definition of the *pagarch* by the indiction year in which he held his office (cf. *O. Dor.* 5.1 from the same Oasis) or by the city of his jurisdiction, but neither of these was in fact necessary. Since the name of the *pagarch* in the aforementioned *O. Dor.* 5, dated possibly to 407/408, is preserved as ending with κ and can, therefore, be restored to read Ἰσὰκ πάγαρχος (suggested by the editor himself in the apparatus), one can speculate and identify the two mentions as pertaining to the same person. Of course, we know nothing about the administrative subdivision of the oasis, neither is it certain where within the oasis *O. Dor.* 5 comes from.<sup>65</sup>

3        It is logical to read παρὰ σοῦ, but the space after παρὰ is almost completely faded and only traces are visible further to the end of the line.

4        The indiction might be specified at the start of the line. The end of the line may contain quantity - ἑπτὰ “seven”.

5        It remains to have a date, unless it is lost on line 1; the last letters before the lacuna could belong to Μεχίρ.

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<sup>65</sup> Only pictures were found of the group, deposited by Fakhry at the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo (WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 86).

### 30. Receipt

Object No. 95/BS/07

Plate No. XXX

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 4 (160 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions 8.9 × 6.9 cm. Complete?; a line could be missing at the top.

Inscribed on the convex side only, perpendicular to the throwing marks. The

surface here and there is dotted by smaller black fungal spots and white salts (?) precipitated on the surface; reading is also affected by a few flakes.

Hand looks confident; script is semi-cursive, with numerous ligatures.

1 παρέσχες ὑ[πὲρ] ια ἰνδικ(τίονος)

2 [ ± 5 ] εἰς τὴν σπορὰν εἰς

3 T R A C E S

4 Ἰακὼβ σεσεμ(εἰώμαι).

5 T R A C E S

1 ἰνδικ 4 read σεση-

“You have given, for the 11<sup>th</sup> indiction, 5 - - - for sowing - - - . I, Jacob, have signed. - - - .”

1 It is very likely that one more line preceded line 1 but is now lost as a result of breakage. It most probably contained greetings.

2–3 The object of the transaction remains unread on these lines. The amount might be represented by ε “5”. Perhaps a *psi* in the second fourth of line 3?

5 Date should be expected here, but only traces of writing remain.



### 31. Receipt (?)

Object No. 16.1/BS/07; 16.15/BS/07

Plate No. XXXI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

#### 16.1/BS/07

Dimensions 2.4 × 3.8 cm. Broken off at the right-hand side and at the top.

#### 16.15/BS/07

Dimensions 4.8 × 5.0 cm. Broken off at all sides. Observations of the physical properties of the sherd such as its thickness, coloring, and throwing marks make it very probable that it belongs to **31**, but the individual fragments do not match immediately.

Both fragments are inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. Large parts of the surface slip had flaked off before it was used for writing. Surface is heavily dotted with black fungal spots which seriously affect readability, especially of the **31** (Object No. 16.15/BS/07) where it is even difficult to discern the individual lines of writing.

Hand is semi-cursive, with varying amount of ligatures.

| 16.1/BS/07            | 16.15/BS/07            |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| - - - - -             | - - - - -              |
| 1 . . .               | 1 ] . . . ὕ.[          |
| 2 ἀνα[                | 2 ] T R A C E S        |
| 3 μωρ[                | 3 ] ὑρ . . T R A C E S |
| 4 Ἰλαρος σε[σημείωμαι | 4 ] T R A C E S        |
|                       | 5 ] T R A C E S        |

### 16.1/BS/07

- 1 Indistinct traces of lower parts of letters are visible to the left.
- 3 Personal name Μῶπος? The third letter could alternatively be a *iota*, definitely an descender.
- 4 Written by a different hand. The *lambda* is well visible and so is the left dot of what might be the *trēma* above *iōta*. Six individual Ἰλαροι are attested at TM dated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; the only later appearance of the name is our other document, 19.

We can expect an abbreviated form of the “I have signed” phrase.

### 16.15/BS/07

- 3 Double diagonal lines are visible about two or three letter spaces after the *rho* as if after a number. It would signal a date, in which case we should consider Hathyr.

## 32. Receipt

Object No. 292/BS/07

Plate No. XXXII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 6 (by conjecture, as it was identified among the pottery fragments that had been preselected for drawing documentation and grouped according to contexts in the course of the excavation); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 21, 2007.

Dimensions 7.4 × 7.0 cm. Broken off at the bottom left-hand corner.

Inscribed on the convex side only, perpendicular to the throwing marks (not apparent on this side). The sherd is covered with substantial patches of white mortar – especially in the upper part; but it obvious that the writing was executed after the fact. This discoloring together with the black fungal

spots makes reading of the faded text very difficult. Ink is extraordinarily black.

Much cannot be said about the scribal hand, but it looks irregular; copious linking of letters.

1 Θ]έων πρ(εσβύτερος) T R A C E S αμ  
 2 TRACES κω . γεωρ(γῶ) χαίρ(ειν).  
 3 ἔλαβον πα[ρὰ σοῦ] . . .  
 4 . . . αρ. T R A C E S  
 5 T R A C E S  
 6 ] TRACES ιω TRACES

1 πρ 2 γεωρ 3 read ἔσχον

“Priest Theon to the tenant farmer - - - son of - - - , greetings. I have received from (you) - - - - - .”

1 Names are lost in the lacunous first two lines. The priest Theon, here substantially restored, is known as the issuer of **15**. As for the recipient, reading Ἀβραὰμ | Ἰακὼβ seems feasible, considering the extant comparanda (incl. **15**) and the traces available; mostly dotted, though.

6 Part of the word “indiction”?

### 33. Receipt (?)

Object No. 102.2/BS/07

Plate No. XXXIII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 4 (180 cm deep); 20 cm off the E and 30 cm off the S wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions 4.8 × 3.7 cm. Broken off at all sides. Although found near the fragment **21**, the pottery fabric of which looks similar, it was not possible to join the two pieces. Surface is dotted with fungal spots.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. Traces of four distinct lines of faded writing.

Hand is semi-cursive.

1       ] . . . . [  
2       ] . πάρεσχε[  
3       ] . . . . . [  
4       ] ρο. [

4       What is read as po could also be φο or φα instead; possibly a form of φόρος. These two letters do not end a word in any case.

#### ***IV. Orders and notes (34–36)***

##### **34. Order for delivery of chaff**

Object No. 293/BS/07

Plate No. XXXIV

August 9, 392 or 407

From House 3, Room 7, SU 1 (by conjecture, as it was identified among the pottery fragments that had been preselected for drawing documentation and grouped according to contexts in the course of the excavation); no further coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, presumably on April 28 or May 5, 2007, when the respective stratigraphic unit was under excavation; identified on May 21, 2007.

Dimensions 8.6 × 8.2 cm. Broken off at upper right corner. Black fungal spots cover most of the sherd.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is semi-cursive and confident.

- 1 Τρωίλος Ἰσιδώ[ρω
- 2 χέ[ρ(ειν).
- 3 λογίσθητι Ἀμωνίω Ἀμ. .[
- 4 μανδάκια δύ[ο] β[ε] [ἀ]χύρω(ν) ὥ[ς]
- 5 εἰς γεφυχ(ικὸν)
- 6 μέρ(ος).
- 7 εἰς δ(ικτίονος)
- 8 Μεσορ(ῆ) ις.

2 read χαί(ρειν)      4 or read ἀχύρου?      6 μέρ      7 ἐνδ      8 ρ

“Trōilos to Isidōros, greetings. Set down to the account of Amōnios son of Am..., two, 2, *mandakia* of chaff for the landlord’s share. In the 5<sup>th</sup> indiction, on Mesore 16.”

Another instance of a transaction between Trōilos and Isidōros is **17** dealing with cotton and dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> indiction. Identity of the scribal hands cannot be assessed with any confidence.

3      The patronymic might be Amōnios, too.

4      *Mandakion* as a unit for measuring chaff does not appear in papyrological documentation published to date, while it is well attested for hay and reeds. See the discussion under 4.2.2.

5–6      *Meros* in the given context is “share”; more specifically, it describes shares of outgoing payments to one’s landlord (*geouchos*). Other examples of “landlord’s shares” from the oases include *O. Kell.* I 73, 74, 78, and 267 and *O. Waqfa* 51 and 57 (the latter one without the adjective).

### 35. Order for a piglet, chicken and eggs

Object Nos. 83.8/BS/07; 83.9/BS/07; 83.10/BS/07; 83.11/BS/07

Plate No. XXXV

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 8, SU 1; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Combined dimensions 9.3 × 10.6 cm. Preserved in four fragments, but complete.

Inscribed on the inner side of a bowl’s bottom and partially on the curve of the base, obliquely to the throwing marks. The sherd is heavily soiled (brown) and dotted by black fungal spots.

The script is semi-cursive, very irregular, with frequent linking of letters. Large number of misspellings.

- 1    Θεώ[π]εμπτος Ἰσὰκ
- 2    Ἡλία. παρὰσχου τῷ ἀδ-
- 3    ελφῷ . . . . . ὧ ὑ(πὲρ) τῆς
- 4    ἔκκτης ἐγδηκτί-
- 5    ωνος ὄρνεια ἔν
- 6    καὶ ὥὰ δέκα.
- 7    Κολλουμε καὶ
- 8    πληρωτόν.

3 υ≠    4 read ἔκτης    4–5 read ἰνδικτί|ονος    5 read ὄρνειον

“Theopemptos to Isac son of Elias. Deliver to the colleague - - -, for the sixth indiction, one chicken and ten eggs. Pay it completely and in full.”

1 A stroke to the left of the beginning of the line might be a witness to an abandoned attempt to start the text in this inconvenient place before the curve of the vessel’s base.

For the personal name Θεόπεμπος, cf. **11**.

2 For a similarly abbreviated verb, see the fifth/sixth century order *P. Vindob. G* 28595.2 (i.e., *SB* XX 14575; edited by W. Hameter in *Pap. Flor.* XIX, pp. 257–8) where, however, the abbreviation is not marked.

3 The name of the colleague (lit. “brother”) must be lost in this blotted and soiled section; it may start with *kappa* followed by *epsilon*. For the word, see 4.3.1.

5 If the reading of the oddly shaped *omicron* (reminiscent of an *alpha*) is in fact correct (and there is little doubt it might not), this document is second within the corpus to attest to the reading ὄρνεον, thus clarifying the otherwise abbreviated instances of ὄρ( ). For the other example, see **27**; cf. also the discussion under 4.2.9. below.

7 Apparently of Latin origin, but Daris does not have it. It might be a derivation of Latin *columis* to express “completely”.

8 Most likely a form of the verb πληρόω “make complete, pay in full”; an adjective?

### **36. Order**

Object No. 16.8/BS/07; 16.16/BS/07

Plate No. XXXVI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Combined dimensions  $6.0 \times 3.9$  cm. Broken off at all sides except for the right-hand side of the concave side.

Inscribed on both sides, parallel with the throwing marks. The surface is discolored, soiled, and covered with black fungal spots.

Hand is experienced, the script is semi-cursive.

#### Concave

- 1 [ ± 5 ]ος Ἀβ[ραὰμ]
- 2 [Ἰακ]ώβ γεωργῶ χέρ(ειν).
- 3 [πᾶ]ρασχε Τιμοθέωι
- 4 [ἀγρ]οφ(ύλακι) ὧν ἐννέ[α]

-----

#### Convex

Very faint traces of undetermined number of lines of writing. No text could be recovered except for the letters *rho* on line 1 and *khi* on line 2.

#### Concave

2 read γεωργῶ ρ 4 φ read ὧν

#### Concave

“- - -os to the tenant farmer Ab[raham son of Jak]ob, greetings. Give to [the field-g(uard)] Timothy 9 eggs - - - .”

By conjecture based on the other two mentions of Timothy within the corpus (especially on **22**), we might date this document to or before Pakhon of the 15<sup>th</sup> indiction by which date Timothy seems to have already been deceased. For the full discussion, see 4.3.3.



Concave 1        Although affected by breakage, the first line of the document seems not to be lost entirely, as we can judge from the text. We can also estimate that about 3 to 5 letters are lost from the name of the issuing person.

Concave 3        If we read the name correctly, this might be the second (to 20) mention of Timothy still alive, while another text (22) makes mention of his heirs only.

Concave 4        The last word may be a number, ἐννέα (nine); what precedes should thus presumably contain a countable commodity – “eggs”, erroneously in singular.

No traces of another line are apparent but there probably was one more line containing a date or signature.

## *V. Letters (37)*

### **37. Letter (?)**

Object No. SN/BS/05

Plate No. XXXVI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 19 (by conjecture; formerly – in the field documentation of the 2005 excavation season – Room II); no archaeological context and coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on Nov. 21, 2005.

Dimensions 12.6 × 10 cm. Broken off at the right-hand side.

Inscribed on the convex and concave side, perpendicular to the throwing marks, but the surface is smooth on both sides.

Hand on the convex side looks unexperienced, unlike on the concave side; majuscule script with only a few ligatures.

### Concave

Four or five (surface slip flaked at top) lines of squibbled writing in the upper right-hand side quadrant of the sherd; the right-hand side being lost due to breakage; writing inverted 180 degrees.

- 1 .ιγ εἶπον δὲ[
- 2 τὰ ἡμικάδ[ια
- 3 εχοσι.[
- 4 ακ.[

### Concave

3 χ written over ξ?

### Convex

- 1 Καὶ ἄλλοτε σοὶ γεγράφεκα . . υς
- 2 μη(νός) Ἐπὶ φεφαίτους ἀρ . . . . .
- 3 δι[ ± 6 ] τῆς τρύγης υ . . . . [
- 4 T R A C E S π . . . μεφ . . . . [
- 5 T R A C E S το T R A C E S [
- 6 T R A C E S

### Convex

1 read -ράφη- 2 read ἐφέ- 3 L

### Convex

“I also/already wrote to you on another occasion ... in/for the month of Epeiph  
... in/of the year 71 ... of the harvest ....”

**Convex 1** The underlying assumption here is that the writer makes reference to his own previous action, hence, although not clearly discernible, the verb is read in first person. It may refer to the matters recorded on the concave side.

The stroke that would make σου of σοῖ, besides not being helpful in our understanding of the text, is probably only a surface defect.

An alternative perfect form of γράφειν is also conceivable, namely γέγραφα. Preference was given to the current γεγράφηκα due to the visible traces of a descending letter that might belong to *kappa*; unless it represents the initial letter of a word following it.

It is possible that the right-hand end of the line is broken off.

If the reading is correct, this opening line could identify the document as a letter. It would start rather abruptly; at the least, an address line identifying the writer and his or her addressee should precede. The only similarly abrupt case in PN is *P. Ant. II 95* dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, with traces of writing on the verso as well.

**Convex 2** The reading of the sequence ἐπιφέφ is secure; it puts aside any form of ἐπιφέρω or of any other verb that would take the first two letters for μη.

**Convex 4** The raised curve near the end of the line may belong to *epsilon* or *upsilon*.

**Convex 5** Beginning of the line is possibly lost due to the breakage of the potsherd.

## *VI. Uncertain Texts (38–50)*

### **38. Uncertain Text**

Object No. 16.2/BS/07

Plate No. XXXVIII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 6.6 × 3.0 cm; 1.03 cm thick. Broken off at all sides. The breakage lines look recent, but the fragment does not seem to belong to any of the other pieces collected from the same stratigraphic situation and bearing the same head object number. Its substantial thickness is unparalleled within the group. The fragment probably comes from the right-hand part of an ostrakon, with a substantial gap in preserved writing between lines 4 and 5. Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. Readability is seriously affected by large black fungal spots on the lines 3 and 4.

Little can be said about the hand except that it looks unexperienced and the script is semi-cursive.

1                    ].[

2    ]. δονου[

3    ]λιωνος[

4    ] ου . . .[

5    ]υτον[

2            Although with no immediate meaning, this sequence could belong to a patronymic, as we probably find on the following line.

3        Several names come to mind, from Ἀχιλλίῳν to Πωλίῳν. But perhaps  
Νῶνοϛ is the correct reading, a form of Νόννοϛ, common name of the era.

5        Nothing seems to occupy the large space between the lines 4 and 5.

### **39. Uncertain Text**

Object No. 16.12/BS/07

Plate No. XXXIX

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 5.6 × 3.4 cm. Broken off at all sides, with the probable exception  
of the bottom side.

Inscribed on the convex side only, with no apparent throwing marks. Five to  
seven lines of faded fragmented text.

Nothing can be said about the scribal hand.

- - - - -

1    ]TRACES[  
2    ]TRACES[  
3    ]TRACES χα.[  
4    ]TRACES  
5    ]TRACES

### **40. Uncertain Text**

Object No. 16.13/BS/07

Plate No. XL

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 8.5 × 6.2 cm. Broken off at the left-hand side and the top (recently). The sherd is badly faded and soiled.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks (but the surface is smooth). It is not apparent how many lines of text the document contains; clearly discernible are only two, but the sherd would allow for about four more.

-----  
1                   ] ἰνδικ(τίονος)  
2    ] Ἀβραὰμ Ἰακὼβ ὥδν α

1 κ

From the hints of the structure one could conclude that this document is an account and could expect, e.g., λόγος + a number before the indiction. However, since the top of the sherd was apparently damaged, our line 1 does not need to be the actual beginning of the document.

#### 41. Uncertain Text

Object No. 16.19/BS/07

Plate No. XLI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12, SU 1 (60–80 cm); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on April 29, 2007.

Dimensions 7 × 7.1 cm. Broken off at the bottom left-hand and right-hand side, and the top right-hand side, and at the top.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

There is little we can say about the scribal hand; it look regular, linking of letter seldom.

-----  
 1                   ] . . . . [  
 2   ] . . πν TRACES νου . [  
 3   θεε εὐρῖν α TR A C E S   ω . [  
 4   π . . ρασει π . . . . . τησου . . [  
 5   τουτ TR A C E S   τη TR A C E S   [  
 6   η TR A C E S   T R A C E S   [  
 7   ] T R A C E S   ν T R A C E S   [  
 8   ] T R A C E S   [  
 9   ] . . . ειθη . [

2 ο<sup>υ</sup>      3 read εὐρεῖν      4 ο<sup>υ</sup>

#### 42. Uncertain Text

Object No. 23/BS/07

Plate No. XLII

Late IV / early V (29 April 401?).

From House 3, Room 12, SU 2 (80 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 1, 2007.

Dimensions 11.0 × 7.2 cm. Broken off recently at upper left-hand side.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. The upper part of the surface is affected by numerous scratches into the sherd (obviously pre-firing), while the lower part is soiled and dotted with black fungal spots.

Hand is experienced; the script is semi-cursive, with many ligatures.

1        ] T R A C E S    T R A C E S  
 2        ] T R A C E S    τ    T R A C E S  
 3    T R A C E S        T R A C E S  
 4    .. δ . . . . . χοροδέλφακα ἔν.  
 5    Παχών δ' ἰδὲ ἰνδικ(τίονος)  
 6    T R A C E S

4 read χοιροδέλφακα    read ἔνα        5 ✕

4        Less likely -φακίων (for -φάκιον). The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century parallels for piglets χοιροδέλφακες are *P. Cair. Preis.* 41.10–11, *P. Lond.* III 1259.6.9, and *P. Stras.* IV 186.11 (supplemented). The spelling of the word with ο instead of οι is nowhere attested, neither is it a common interchange that occurs only in the forms of ποιεῖν and in a few other words (on the οι > ο interchange, see GIGNAC, *Greek Grammar*, I 199–201; χοῖρος not listed). More acceptable is the οι > ω interchange, but the present traces seem too narrow to contain an *omega*.

5        If the suggested reading is correct, the document is dated the same month a year after the one other document mentioning a piglet (receipt 22).

Traces of one or two more line(s) are very difficult to see.

#### 43. Uncertain Text

Object No. 33/BS/07

Plate No. XLIII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 12 (by the S wall, 155 cm off the W wall), SU 2 (120 cm deep).

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 1, 2007.



Dimensions  $8.8 \times 4.6$  cm. Broken off at lower left and upper right (apparently recent) and possibly also at the top.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is semi-cursive.

1 ] TRACES [  
2 ] Ἰακὼβ . . . ετης.[  
3 ] καὶ ἀποσταλέντα  
-----

Too fragmentary for a meaningful translation.

#### 44. Uncertain Text

Object No. 83.1/BS/07

Plate No. XLIV

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 8, SU 1; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions  $6.5 \times 11.5$  cm. Broken off at the left-hand and right-hand side and at the top, with the top and left breakages looking recent. Textwise, however, only the first half of the line seems to be missing at the top.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Hand is irregular, script is semi-cursive.

1 ] . . . κ. χαίρειν.  
2 ] . εσας τοῦ ὄφ(φικιαλίου) [  
3 ] . γεωργίου . ρ. ἰω[  
4 ] T R A C E S . καὶ .[

5 ] TRACES γ TRACES

4 to 5 more lines of traces

1 The issuer is lost due to the breakage; the addressee remains unread (only upper tips of the letters are preserved).

2 There is no sign of abbreviation, but no other likely resolution of ὁφ( ) comes to my mind. As the *officium* of this “member of the staff” is not stated, he could be either a civilian or military *officialis* (cf. under 4.6.2.).

3 Similarly, no sign of abbreviation. To read γεωργῶ χ... is unlikely due to a gap after *rho* and a very unconvincing *omega*.

5 Towards the end of the line, traces of Γ(.

#### 45. Uncertain Text

Object Nos. 83.2/BS/07, 83.7/BS/07

Plate No. XLV

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 8, SU 1; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Combined dimensions  $8.9 \times 8$  cm. Broken off at the left-hand and top right-hand side. Surface of the upper right corner damaged (recently). The sherd is heavily soiled, especially in the upper and left-hand part; black fungal spots all across the surface.

Inscribed on the concave side only (?), obliquely to the throwing marks. The now dark-brown ink interferes with the soiled surface.

Hand is confident and fast; script is semi-cursive.

1 . T R A C E S

2 ] . ε σ . T R A C E S χ T R A C E S

- 3     ] [ ± 6 ] ἕνα μόνα καὶ .  
 4     ] .δέματα δέκα πέντε.  
 5     Παῦνι κ.

5 Ὡ

Lines 3–5: “- - - one only, and - - fifteen bundles of - - -. 20 Pauni.”

- 1       By comparison with the *iota* on line 5, the initial letter might not be a *iota*.
- 2       We could expect a verb of receiving, such as παρέσχες. But although the traces after *sigma* could belong to a *khi*, the traces at the beginning of the line (at the edge of the breakage) do not conform with *rho*.
- 3       The traces of writing at the beginning of the line are lost in the soiling, so that it cannot be determined whether εἴκοσι ἕνα (for ε. ἕν) stood there (to agree to the numeral given later) or anything else. We cannot exclude there was one more letter to complement the number (*alpha* or *epsilon*), because the surface is chipped off along the breakage line between the two fragments. It would have to sit above the prolonged lower stroke of *kappa*.
- 4       The unit of measure is typically found with hay, chaff, ears of corn, or rushes, but neither were detected in the text, except for possible traces of rushes (in the form of σχοίνων) at the end of line 2.
- 5       The date corresponds with 14 June.

#### 46. Uncertain Text

Object No. 83.4/BS/07

Plate No. XLVI

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 8, SU 1; no coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 5, 2007.

Dimensions  $6.4 \times 6.8$  cm. Complete?

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks.

Red slip has flaked off in patches over the potsherd exposing the underlying fabric, but the preserved writing seems to have been applied after the flaking had occurred; the surface is also affected by black patches. No discernible lines of writing are preserved on either side. Extant in the upper left-hand corner in black ink is an unreadable sign which looks like a *zeta* with a dot over it.

#### 47. Uncertain text

Object No. 252/BS/07

Plate No. XLVII

Late IV / early V.

From House 3. No further archaeological data are available, but it probably comes from the fill of Room 12, which was under excavation on the day and the day before the sherd was found placed on the wall between Rooms 16, 17, and 12, where excavators had placed it during the clearing of the respective rooms.

Found on May 13, 2007.

Dimensions  $3.4 \times 4.1$  cm. Broken off at all sides – a central fragment.

Inscribed on the convex side only, perpendicular to the throwing marks.

Reading is complicated by black fungal spots and irregularities in the slip.

Hand is semicursive, regular and confident.

Due to the fragmentary nature of the text, I also provide the diplomatic transcription.

|   |            |   |            |
|---|------------|---|------------|
| 1 | ] .χϞ[     | 1 | ] .χϞ[     |
| 2 | ]κι καὶ λ[ | 2 | ]κι καὶ λ[ |

|   |          |   |                  |
|---|----------|---|------------------|
| 3 | ].υχωι.[ | 3 | γε]ούχω ι.[      |
| 4 | ]εινδ    | 4 | ]ε ἰνδ(ικτίονος) |

2 καὶ probably is a separate word. The preceding syllable, then, would be a dative ending.

3 Very likely restoration would be γε]ούχω. Repeatedly attested within *O. Sarm.* (dated between 403 and 413) from the same Oasis is an expression ἰδίῳ γεούχῳ Ἰσάκ; always in the “address line”, however. It is possible to read β instead of ι.

4 To read “the 15<sup>th</sup> indiction” makes good sense, but the first *iota* is not secure; in fact, γε is a feasible reading here, though with no apparent meaning, and also what would our *delta* looks more like an *alpha*.

#### 48. Uncertain Text

Object Nos. 278/BS/07; 291/BS/07

Plate No. XLVIII

Late IV / early V.

##### 278/BS/07

From House 3, Room 11W, SU 6 (290 cm deep), 240 cm off S wall, 360 cm off W wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3, on May 19, 2007.

Dimensions 5.1 × 5.9 cm. The fragment belongs to Object No. 291/BS/07; broken off at all sides.

##### 291/BS/07

Found on May 20, 2007, on a spoil heap east of House 3. The archaeological context, by conjecture, might correspond to Object No. 278/BS/07.

Dimensions 2.2 × 4.5 cm. The fragment belongs to Object No. 278/BS/07; broken off at all sides.

**Both fragments** are inscribed on the convex side only, obliquely to the throwing marks (but the surface is very smooth). The surface is affected by dark-brown spots of fungi and soil.

The scribal hand is cursive and hard to read, with only a few unlinked letters.

-----

1                    ]Ἰσὰκ χ[αίρειν.  
 2                    ] ..... αὐκλ.[  
 3    ].....[  
 4    ].....ρ( )...[  
 5    ], γεουχικὸν τῆς .[  
 6    T R A C E S  
 7    ]εἶρεω(ξύλου) λί(τρας) β[

7 read εἶρεω(ξύλου) λ

7        This reading and interpretation is not without reservations – very nonstandard spelling on top of badly faded ink. An alternative reading of εἶφι could suggest the month of Epeiph, but would also leave us stranded with the securely legible *omega*.

#### 49. Uncertain Text

Object No. 294/BS/07

Plate No. IL

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 6 (by conjecture, as it was identified among the pottery fragments that had been preselected for drawing documentation

and grouped according to contexts in the course of the excavation); no coordinates recorded.

Found on May 21, 2007.

Dimensions 5.6 × 10.4 cm. Broken off at the right-hand side. The sherd represents a fragment of the left mid-part of an ostrakon, with two lines of text and two more lines with traces. Salts precipitated on the surface at the top. Serious discolorings of the sherd do not seem to affect the inscribed part.

Inscribed on the convex side only, with no discernible throwing marks.

The scribal hand is experienced; the cursive script is characteristic by long and curly lower ends of letters.

-----

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 1 | T R A C E S . ωσ[   |
| 2 | T R A C E S υρπται[ |
| 3 | ἐρρωσθαι .[         |

2 ü

2 Extant letters do not form any recognizable word. A few strokes on the further left seem to suggest that the potsherd was inscribed there too, but there is hardly anything of note on the other lines.

3 We can expect the phrase to conclude with “σε εὔχομαι”. Documents featuring an expression of prayers for someone(’s health) are in general more likely to be letters, but we lack any more evidence in this our case.

## 50. Uncertain text

Object No. 297/BS/07

Plate No. L

Late IV / early V.

From House 3, Room 25, Context 1 (by conjecture, as it was identified among the pottery fragments that had been preselected for drawing documentation and grouped according to contexts in the course of the excavation); no further coordinates recorded.

Found within the excavation of House 3, presumably on May 7, 14, 19 or 20, 2007, when the respective stratigraphic unit was under excavation; identified on May 23, 2007.

Dimensions 12.3 × 7.4 cm. Broken off at upper right corner.

Inscribed on the convex side only, parallel with the throwing marks. Reading is difficult due to the extremely faded ink and the dark surface of the sherd.

With the exception of the ει ligature and α joined up with the following character, the scribal hand uses separate, non-joined-up letters. Hand is fairly regular.

- 1 Παπνώτ[ις] πρ(εσβύτερος) Ὁρίων δ(ιὰ) γεοργῶ
- 2 χέρ(ειν). φ [ ± 9 ] ψ . πη . . υ
- 3 κα [ ± 14 ] υ . . . υ .
- 4 Ἐπεὶφ . Δϝ ἰνδικ(τίονος) T R A C E S
- 5 T R A C E S

1 πρ Δϝ read Ὁρίωνι read γεοργῶ 2 χέρ read χαίρειν 4 Δϝ K

“Priest Papnou(this) to Hōriōn through the farmer, greetings. [ - - - - ] ?  
Epeiph, the 4<sup>th</sup> indiction. - - -.”



1        The document opens with the name Παπνούθις, a form of Egyptian Παννοϋτε. Especially suggestive are similarities between this document and **18**, where the issuing party is a priest Παπϋϋθις, who is pronounced illiterate and has the document written by someone else on his behalf, but who is very likely the same person. Identity of the Horion is intriguing given the fact that he is approached through a farmer and probably is not one himself; could he be the same as the potter Ὀρ in **1.9**?

5        Dispersed faint traces of what could be ink. A few more such traces below can point to 1 or 2 additional lines, unless they are rather caused by the discoloration of sherd surface. If the priest issuing this document can be identified with the Παπϋϋθις in **18**, who is introduced as illiterate, we should expect a similar closing statement on this line or perhaps starting on line 4, eventually continuing on line 6.

### 3.2. INSCRIPTIONS

Singled out as a separate category of inscribed material evidence in this work are informal inscriptions. In doing so, I adopted the narrow definition of papyrological material as comprising only texts. In our case, those texts are all documents written on ostraka, as no papyri have been found at Bīr Shawīsh to date. Our informal inscriptions, on the other hand, even though in fact inscribed on diverse ceramic supports as well, refer, in one way or another, to the actual vessel, its content or a disposing person. Because it is obvious that the intentions and use of documentary ostraka on one hand and inscriptions on the other were substantially different, a classification based on that difference as employed here can be instrumental in understanding the both groups of evidence in their own context.

While the fundamental aspects for distinguishing between ostraka and other incipations are internal in nature (they concern the contents), we shall subdivide the informal inscriptions according to the techniques employed; the two groups are *dipinti* and *graffiti*.

Archaeological context of both groups of informal inscriptions is presented in the following table.

| Publication Number | House | Room | SU | Comments                                     |
|--------------------|-------|------|----|--|
| I. Bir Sh. 1       | 3     | 11E  | 6  | 250 deep                                     |
| I. Bir Sh. 2       | 3     | 12   | 2  | 120 deep; by E wall                          |
| I. Bir Sh. 3       | 3     | 11E  | 3  | 110 deep; 65 off S wall, 185 off E wall      |
| I. Bir Sh. 4       | 3     | 11E  | 6  | 250 deep; 80 off E wall, 140 off N wall      |
| I. Bir Sh. 5       | 3     | 19   | -  |  |
| I. Bir Sh. 6       | 3     | -    | -  | spoil heap find                              |
| I. Bir Sh. 7       | 3     | 11W  | 4  |  |
| I. Bir Sh. 8       | 3     | 11E  | 5  | 180 (fieldbook), or 260 (list of finds) deep |
| I. Bir Sh. 9       | 3     | 11W  | 3  | 155 deep; 340 off W wall, 255 off S wall     |
| I. Bir Sh. 10      | 3     | 11W  | 5  | 200 deep; 390 off W wall, 40 off S wall      |

Tab. 4: Archaeological context of informal inscriptions.

### 3.2.1. *Dipinti* or Painted Inscriptions

*Dipinti*, also called *tituli picti*, include inscriptions made by applying ink with a pen or brush.<sup>66</sup>

#### 1. Notation on a transport amphora

Object No. 226/BS/07

Plate No. LI

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 6 (250 cm deep); no coordinates recorded.

Found on May 8, 2007.

The support is a transport amphora Bonifay 42, Keay 57, Peacock-Williams Class 35. Preserved is a fragment comprising of part of the neck and shoulder and a part of the rim with one handle. It is not obvious when the breakage occurred.

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<sup>66</sup> For the classification of *dipinti* and the formulation of the subfield of dipintologie, see FOURNET, Dipintologie.

Inscribed is the upper shoulder of the convex side.

Dimensions: Line 1 length 8.46 cm, height of the last *rho* 2.8 cm. Line 2 length 7.35 cm, height of the *rho* 2.62 cm.

Previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed, and decorated, p. 102.

Commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

1 ]συρ ρρρ

2 Σαραπάμωγ

It cannot be stated with any certainty, but the two lines look as if written by two distinct hands. There may be another line of text below the presented inscription but it has been washed out or has entirely faded.

1 With its meaning unknown and the beginning likely lost, several options can be considered.

The tripple *rho*, which could also be read as three times “100”, escapes explanation entirely.

The first three preserved letters lack any sign of abbreviation but they are likely not the last letters of a word and may not be the first either. Adding to the puzzle is the fact that the reading is not secure, as each of the three letters can be read in two ways:

- *sigma*, although not by itself impossible, is different from the secure *sigma* on line 2 and should perhaps be read as *epsilon*;

- *ypsilon* could also be *alpha*;

- *rho* could also be *phi*, created as a vertical half-circle on the left and a half-circle on the right, which curves upon crossing the first half-circle and continues as a vertical stroke below the line; the circle remaining incomplete and open at the top.

One can expect either a name or a unit or a substance or a formula related to the content. Since no likely substance<sup>67</sup> or a unit of measurement comes to mind, we shall discuss possible names. Probably the most ready is an abbreviation of the name from line 2, Σαρ(απάμων), as proposed in the *editio princeps*, but its comparison with the rest of the inscription poses serious problems: the *sigma-alpha* ligature when compared to line 2, *rho* when compared both to the linked example on line 2 and the separate examples on line 1. Name Σορίων, e.g., is attested down to the 8<sup>th</sup> century and published examples include Western Desert sites in the Great Oasis (*O. Kell.* 136.2; *P. Kell.* IV 96.120; *O. Trim.* I 232.2, 239.2).

Second most likely alternative reading ]εϋφ( ) brings to mind words that would belong to the group of formulae, such as εὔφημ-. J.-L. Fournet, considering the published photograph, proposes to read, with reservation and no explanation, ]εϋρ.<sup>68</sup> It needs to be concluded that there is no secure interpretation of the notation to date.

2 The theophoric personal name Sarapamon is a single-*mu* version of the common Σαραπάμων and is attested in this form fifty-six times in TM People, with fifty-two individuals, including five individuals from the fourth-century Great Oasis (*O. Douch* II 108, V 526 & 613, *O. Waqfa* 4 & 24; accessed March 8, 2015).

## 2. Personal names on a wine jar

Object No. 37/BS/07

Plate No. LII

From House 3, Room 12, SU 2 (120 cm deep), by the E wall; no further coordinates recorded.

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<sup>67</sup> Σάφ(ων) “soap” for the correct σάπων is unlikely although the form is attested, unabbreviated, in a list of articles shipped from Oxyrhynchos between 400 and 599 CE (see P. Oxy. XVI 1924.3).

<sup>68</sup> After DELATTRE – DIJKSTRA – VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

Found on May 1, 2007.

The support is a LR1 table amphora; total height 23.5 cm, body outer diameter 15.5 cm, neck outer diameter 5.6 cm, neck inner diameter 4.8 cm, base diameter 6.7 cm. Preserved complete, with salt precipitated on the surface and black fungal dotting; limited flaking of the surface slip.

Inscribed is the mid- and lower shoulder of the convex side.

Dimensions: line 1 length ca. 4.3 cm, width of *pi* 8 mm, height of *rho* 6.7 mm; line 2 upper width of the first *pi* 9 mm, height of the *alpha* 7.7 mm; line 3 height of *kappa* 14.2 mm, width of *pi* 10 mm.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed, and decorated, pp. 103–105.

Commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

- 1 Πέτρος
- 2 Παπν[οῦθ]ις
- 3 καὶ Πέτρος

3 read καὶ

“Peter, Papnoute, and Peter.”

The names are common Christian names frequently attested in the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century Egypt where the inscription might be dated by comparison with the rest of the material evidence from House 3. One can vividly imagine these to be names of three companions who gathered around the wine jar emptying its content, once so typical a product of the Oasis. Indeed, it seems that the three individual inscriptions belong to three distinctive scribal hands.

In addition to the names, one isolated vertical stroke is apparent on the shoulder between the handle and Παπν[οῦθ]ις. It is not evident whether it formed a part of another inscription or is just an accidental stroke.

2 The unread part makes it impossible to determine the exact form of the name, which is certainly a variation of the Greek Παπνούθιος and the Coptic Παπνοῦτε. My deliberate choice of Παπνοῦθις is close to the “classic”, most frequently attested aspirated form, yet it agrees with two more attestations in O. Bir Sh. from the same House 3 of the name in that it ends in -θις. Other alternative spellings include Greek Παπνούθης, Παπνούθιος, Παπνοῦτις or Παφνούθιος and Coptic Παπνοῦθε, Παπνοῦθιος, Παπνοῦθι, Παπνοῦτι, Παφνοῦτι, and Παφνοῦθιος.<sup>69</sup>

3 The actual appearance of two individuals with the same name made it first tempting to read Coptic κε for “another” or “also”. However, after considering the more likely and logical explanation, which involves an interchange of Greek vowels, so common in *koine* Greek, made me reconsider the interpretation in favor of Greek καὶ already in the *editio princeps*. The very common phonological interchange of ε and αι actually occurs in our ostraka quite frequently in rendering χαίρειν routinely as χέρειν.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.2.2. *Graffiti* or Incised Inscriptions

Incised inscriptions or *graffiti* include both those executed before and after firing into the surface of a support. We shall first introduce the inscriptions which were apparently incised into a soft potter’s clay before the respective vessel was fired in a potter’s kiln. Next will follow the inscriptions which were scratched into the surface of a respective vessel after this one was fired.

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. HASITZKA, *Namen*, pp. 70–71, 73.

<sup>70</sup> For a general account on this phonological interchange of ε and αι, see GIGNAC, *Grammar*, II, pp. 192–193.

Information on the style of execution is included within the description data paragraph of each entry. The supports or inscribed objects include two lamps, a likely pot lid, a flagon, a jug, and an amphora fragment.

### **3. Lamp with the name Apollo**

Object No. 54/BS/07

Plate No. LIII

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 3 (110 cm deep); 65 cm off the S wall, 185 cm off the E wall of the room.

Found on May 3, 2007.

The support is a ceramic oil-lamp, wheel-made probably locally, low type with narrow mouth and central disc.

Dimensions: height 30.6 mm, handle to spout length 103 mm, central hole diameter 16.6 mm. Preserved complete, with a small part chipped off from near the nozzle during the excavation works in 2007.

Inscribed before firing along the shoulder between a handle and a nozzle in the counter-clock direction. The execution is rough. The length of the inscription measured around the lamp is ca. 63 mm; height of *alpha* 84 mm, height of *omicron* 55 mm.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed, and decorated, p. 94–95.

Reprinted and commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 209.

Ἀπολλῶς ββ

Apollo is a common name through the entire Graeco-Roman era, with 846 attestations in TM People. Apollon attested in O. Bir. Sh. 63.1/BS/07 and 272/BS/07 might not be the same person.



The double *beta* (see also 4 below) is enigmatic. There is a horizontal stroke running across the letters joining them approximately in the middle of their height. Judging from the grooves, this stroke was done after ββ were inscribed.

#### **4. Lamp with the name Apollos**

Object No. 225/BS/07

Plate No. LIV

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 6 (250 cm deep); 80 cm off E wall and 140 cm off N wall of the room.

Found on May 8, 2007.

The support a ceramic oil-lamp, wheel-made probably locally, low type with narrow mouth and central disc.

Dimensions: height 56 mm, handle to spout length 79 mm. Preserved complete. Inscribed before firing along the shoulder between a handle and a nozzle in the counter-clock direction. The execution is careful and neat.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, *Written, inscribed, and decorated*, p. 94–95.

Reprinted and commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 209.

Ἀπολλῶς ββ

For the interpretation, see I. Bir Sh. 3 above. Like in the previous case, there is a horizontal stroke running across the double *beta* joining them approximately in the middle of their height. Judging from the marks left in the vertical stroke of the first *beta*, this connecting stroke was done after ββ were inscribed.

## 5. Flagon with writing

Object No. 13/BS/05

Plate No. LV

From House 3, Room 19 (formerly – in the field documentation before the 2007 season – Room 2); no SU or coordinates recorded.

Found in early Nov. 2007.

The support is a miniature flagon or a pitcher type vessel (*lagynos* or *lagenos*).

The vessel has an oval body swelling up and outward from the base, very broad shoulder, long cylindrical neck ending with a beak spout, and a vertical handle attached at shoulder and opposite the spout. Base is low and slightly separated. Neck is stroked around with dots. In the middle of the handle is a vertically running groove; the handle is deviated towards right in the lower end.

Dimensions: max. height 64 mm, max. body diameter 69 mm, outer neck diameter over the dotted line 21 mm, inner neck diameter 6.5 and 8 mm. Preserved complete but slightly damaged – upper part of the rim is missing (looks abraded, with apparent denting), the tip of the spout is chipped off (looks recent).

Inscribed before firing on the top shoulder surface. Dimensions of the text: height of *theta* 12 mm, height of *tau* 9.3 mm, height of the initial *eta* 11.3 mm; width of *theta* 12.5 mm.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed, and decorated, p. 96–98.

Reprinted and commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

HIETOIΘOH

The inscription runs around the entire vessel. Some letters are irregular or repaired (consider the size!) but the reading as provided above is secure. There are also noticeable space irregularities between individual letters – larger space

between the first letters, considerably tighter within the group of IΘO, and again a bit more space for the last *eta* the last stroke of which, however, is almost completely erased – probably as result of a subsequent attaching of the handle (also its deviation towards right in the lower end may suggest it was attached only after incising the text). If the ancient writer started from the handle (or its expected position – to be easily determined by the position of the pointy spout) to the right, he found himself in the second half of the jug’s perimeter after writing only the first three letters of total nine, which made him to put the following five letters close to each other, gaining thus more than enough space for the last one (but he still had to deviate the handle a bit). This can explain the space irregularities and provide enough support for our suggestion that the incision should be read from the handle to the right as transcribed above.

The meaning of the incision, however, is far from certain. There are no exclusively Coptic letters employed to identify the inscription easily as Coptic. But while I cannot find a plausible explanation in Greek, Coptic does offer a more feasible solution – ⲙⲓ ⲉ ⲧⲟⲓⲑⲟⲥⲏ which I would suggest to translate as “the house of Tithoes” where ⲉ needs to be looked at as the *status nominalis* of the mark of relationship (Sahidic ⲙ- “of”) that occurs in this variant form in the Fayyomic dialect of Coptic and in the Sahidic dialect with Fayyomic tendency<sup>71</sup> and is very frequent in texts from the region between Oxyrhynchos and Bawit in the Nile Valley.<sup>72</sup> When we consider the direct connection of the Small Oasis with the Arsinoites and Oxyrhynchites, a text exhibiting hints of Fayyomic linguistic milieu should not come as surprise, even though there are no published texts in Coptic directly from the Oasis. Although the phrase is with no parallels, it is grammatically correct, with no definite article necessary to introduce ⲙⲓ.

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. CRUM, *Dictionary*, p. 215a.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. KAHLE, *Bala’iza*, pp. 113–114 (with examples).

ΗΙ Ε ΤΟΙΘΟΗ is nevertheless only a tentative interpretation of the incision.<sup>73</sup> And while there is only little doubt about the personal name (unattested in this exact form, but possibly one of the variants of the Greek Τιθοῆς), another explanation for ΗΙΕ might be necessary.

## **6. Amphora fragment with ιϙωϙ**

No Object No.

Plate No. LVI

Surface find from a spoil heap near the south-western corner of House 3, consisting of the filling material cleared from that part of the house during the excavations in late April and May 2007. By conjecture, this sherd may come from the southern part of the house closer to its south-western corner, originally deposited no deeper than ca. 40 cm below surface level, as only limited clearing was done in that section of House 3.

Found outside any excavation on December 4, 2012.

The support is a small fragment of a LR1 table amphora, comparable with I. Bir Sh. 2 above and with many other amphorae of that kind excavated from House 3; its dimensions are 6.7 × 5.1 cm.

The inscription was incised before firing on the convex side, parallel with the throwing marks. By comparison with complete examples of LR1 amphorae we can safely assume the position of the inscription – on the lower shoulder just above the maximal bulge along the concentric grooves on the body which agrees with the position of dipinti I. Bir Sh. 2. The inscription is apparently fragmentary, with traces visible to the left.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, *Written, inscribed, and decorated*, p. 98–99.

Reprinted and commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

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<sup>73</sup> DELATTRE – DIJKSTRA – VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210, calls for a revision of the interpretation, but does not give any suggestions.

] . ισως [

There is a stroke to the upper right of the *iota*; it might be rather accidental than part of a *diaeresis*. The two horizontal but slightly inclined strokes on the farthest left may also be accidental, as they resemble the strokes around the first *sigma*, but the possibility cannot be excluded that inscription has broken off on the left-hand side and they are part of another letter (a *sigma*, e.g.). Similarly, it cannot be excluded that there were more letters to the right, now broken off. Hence the prudent transcription above.

Any attempts on interpreting the inscription are very tentative. They can include personal names, such as Ἰσῶς or Πίσος.<sup>74</sup>

#### 7–8. Jar Lids

Object No. SNum/BS/07

Plate No. LVII

From House 3, Room 11W, SU 4; no SU or coordinates recorded.

Found in excavation of House 3 on May 5, 2007.

Previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed and decorated, p. 107, fig. 6.12.

Mentioned in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210

Object No. 264/BS/07

Plate No. LVIII

From House 3, Room 11E, SU 5 (180 cm deep?).

Found within the excavation of House 3 on May 7, 2007.

Dimensions: height 6.5 cm, diameter 5.7 cm.

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<sup>74</sup> Ἰσῶς is attested five times in TM People, all before 275 CE. No attestation of Πίσος is known to date, Πίσωσις is known only from *I. Syr.* 16.3, and a second and a fifth century occurrence is available, within the published papyrological and epigraphic documentation, of Πίσος (accessed on March 9, 2015).

Previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed and decorated, p. 106, pl. 6.2c.

Mentioned in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

Bearing letters of the Greek alphabet, the lids **7** and **8** are included here, while the vast majority of their likes fall under decorated material. The only comparanda known to me come from Amheida in Dakhla Oasis where some examples were excavated in the disturbed archaeological contexts of the temple area and may belong probably to New Kingdom; more examples are known from Mut. Neither are decorated and remain unpublished.<sup>75</sup> The appearance of similar lids in New Kingdom contexts may point to just another instance of archaizing tendencies in the oases of the Roman Period.

The two specimens that interest us in this place, read ΔΟ and XXOE, respectively. The meaning of the letters alludes me completely. Attempts to see in these letters abbreviated words did not produce any convincing results.

A brief description of the group of these artifacts may be helpful in acknowledging their functions and uses. They appeared in the same contexts with other ceramic material, and even though none was found in a functional position, they could be identified as vessel lids (Gr. πώματα). These lids have a round shape of a cone with a flat base. The conical stalk would fit inside the jar's mouth, leaving the flattened base exposed on the exterior. It is reasonable to assume that a potter producing vessels would also make these lids to deliver them together with the vessels. In our case, too, we might be dealing with purposely and mass-produced earthenware. The variability in the shapes of the stalks as well as in their perimeter, however, suggests that these lids were not cast from a mold, but were rather turned out on a wheel, if not made by hand.

Technically speaking, such lids are but mere plugs or bungs and simultaneous application of a sealing material would be necessary to assure fixation and to prevent leakage. In cases when a vegetable plug such as leaves, papyrus, twigs or wattle was used, it even served only as a bedding to prevent

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<sup>75</sup> I owe this information to Dr. Paola Davoli (personal communication).

the sealing compound from falling into the wine. In effect, the seal was the stopper.<sup>76</sup> Technology of this kind is known from other historical periods and regions, too. In these instances, a ceramic chip, pebble stone, twig, leaves, papyrus, cork or a cloth was used as a plug, while clay, poured plaster, pozzolana or simply mud or even excrement sealed this plug. No traces of a sealing material were reported on the flattened upper surface of our vessel stoppers raising questions about the pieces' uses.

It should also be pointed out that even though there are some features that appear on more than one stopper, the design of each of the stoppers is unique; the overall patterns do not repeat themselves.

### **9. Vessel fragment with the name Apol( )**

Object No. 68/BS/07

Plate No. LIX

From House 3, Room 11W, SU 3 (155 cm deep); 340 cm off the W wall, 255 cm off the S wall.

Found within the excavation of House 3 on May 3, 2007.

The support is a fragmented ceramic vessel with a substantial knob (51.7 mm in diameter). Breakage lines look old. Dimensions ca. 9.6 × 8.1 cm. Broken off below the inscription.

Inscribed after firing, on the convex side, parallel with the throwing marks.

Inscription dimensions: length 59.4 mm, height of the *betas* 17.4 mm.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed, and decorated, pp. 94–96.

Commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

Ἀπολ(λως) ββ

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<sup>76</sup> See MAYERSON, Jar Stoppers, pp. 217–218.

The restoration owes to the two other examples of the name in I. Bir Sh. 1 and 2. As was the case with the two previous inscriptions, the horizontal stroke over the double *beta* was apparently done last.

Originally identified by the excavators simply as a vessel fragment, the type and use of the original vessel warrant some considerations. Two theories have been formulated. The team archaeologist assumes it might be a bottom fragment and, indeed, we can use the massive appearance in support of this view, but no comparable vessel is in fact known from the site. I would, therefore, argue that this is a fragment of a cookware lid of which only the upper part is preserved. It has a substantial knob with an out-turned rim for a better grip and can, in fact, be compared to a few examples preserved complete from the same House 3 (Object Nos. 126/BS/07, 136/BS/07, 146/BS/07, 147/BS/07, 148/BS/07, and 181/BS/07), most of which, to be sure, are perforated with a central steam-hole in their knob. More hints, I believe, can give us the actual orientation of the inscription. If it were a lid, the inscription would appear on it in a good, upright horizontal position. The piece is too fragmented to allow any estimation as to the lid's original diameter.

The relatively small number of lids found in excavation of House 3 may be due to their presumed lower vulnerability to damage, in comparison to the cooking pots with which they would be used. Better durability of the ware, together with good visibility of the inscription written on it, aids our understanding of one's decision to have his name written on a lid. Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that the incision was done after the assumed lid had been discarded; we only know that it was incised before it suffered the substantial damage apparent today.

#### **10. Jug with χμβ**

Object No. 243/BS/07

Plate No. LX



From House 3, Room 11W, SU 5 (200 cm deep); 390 cm off the W wall, 40 cm off the S wall.

Found on May 12, 2007.

The support is a one-handle water jar or pitcher, which measures 28.8 cm bottom-to-rim, max. body width 21.8 cm, outer mouth diameter 9.28 cm, inner mouth diameter 7.14 cm. The vessel is cracked open to the right a below the incision.

Incised after firing, over the shoulders of the jug. Dimensions: length ca. 17 cm, height between 6.2 and 10.1 cm (with minimum over *khi*, maximum over the *beta*). The lower belly of *beta* done with several light scratches. The execution is rough.

Inscription previously published in: DOSPĚL, Written, inscribed, and decorated, pp. 99–101.

Commented upon in: DELATTRE, DIJKSTRA, & VAN DER VLIET, *Inscriptions*, p. 210.

χμβ

The reading is certain, the meaning is elusive. Assuming that the incised χμβ does represent something verbal or numerical at all, I am able to think of three basic approaches.

First, the letters can be looked at as an acrostic, with every letter standing for a single word, as it is in the case of the well-known and distinctively Christian monogram χμγ, which most probably reads Χριστὸν Μαρία γεννᾷ (“Mary begat Christ”).<sup>77</sup> There is no parallel for χμβ, however, in the documentation published to date, as far as I am aware, and possible Coptic equivalents to γεννᾷν „to beget“ (namely χπο and μισε) do not offer any help in solving the puzzle. Could we read it as Χριστὸς, Μαρία βοηθοί (“Christ and

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<sup>77</sup> The most recent and thorough discussion of this particularly Christian acrostic is DERDA, *Deir el-Naqlun I*, pp. 179–187, and LLEWELYN, Symbol XMT.

Mary are help”) or perhaps as a pious exclamation Χριστέ, Μαριάμ, βοηθεῖτε! (“Christ, Mary, help!”), which would be a variation of the very common expression “Jesus (Christ) is help” or the like?

Second, the letters χμβ could have – in compliance with the principles of the Greek language – a numerical value. The number would be 642, which is only by 1 less than the χμγ referred to above.<sup>78</sup> Can it be that the writer had in mind number 643 but put 642 by mistake?

The third approach is pertinent to the numerical reading of the letters χμβ and applies rules of the so-called isopsephy, according to which connections are suggested between two distinct words or phrases based on the same numerical value of the letters employed. There was a number of isopsephisms in use in Roman antiquity, among non-Christians and Christians alike.<sup>79</sup> The most common in Christian milieu were ϥθ and χμγ, the first standing for ἀμήν (“amen”; identical numerical value 99: 90 + 9 vs. 1 + 40 + 8 + 50), the latter signaling the phrase θεὸς βοηθός (“God is help”; 643 = 9 + 5 + 70 + 200 + 2 + 70 + 8 + 9 + 70 + 200). Possible isopsephistic interpretation of χμβ or 642 is without a parallel. May it have been that the writer actually wanted to express the encrypted phrase “God is help”, but happened to mistakenly put letters for 642 in the stead of the correct value 643?

For the time being, none of these interpretations can enjoy more credit than a more or less reasonable hypothesis. Although the legibility of the letters on this water jar is not difficult, the meaning cannot be asserted with any certainty and remains to be determined. The Christian character of the incision is also only hypothetical.

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<sup>78</sup> It is nothing but interesting that single digits of the number 642 (if written in Arabic style) make together 12, the number of plenitude.

<sup>79</sup> For examples of non-Christian isopsephisms, see SKEAT, *Isopsephisms*.

## **4. DISCUSSION OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE DOCUMENTATION**

I shall now discuss and summarize a number of selected issues that are embedded in the material presented in this volume and deserve our attention in order for us to contextualize the data, draw conclusions, and, ultimately, verbalize questions that should be answered in the continuing research with the help of new data or better insights. The source of this investigation will be mostly texts, but I will also integrate available archaeological and artifactual data as much as possible. The issues of administrative, economic, and social matters are – due to the very nature of our evidence – among the most obvious aspects to be examined, but we shall address also more general historical questions concerning the settlement history and the final occupational phase in particular.

### **4.1. DATING**

Enquiry about the dating of artifacts (whether archaeological or papyrological in nature) is certainly the most straightforward point of reference for both an archaeologist and papyrologist (or an epigraphist, for that matter). Textual sources of certain kind are more likely than those of other kinds to contain in

themselves information concerning their date or the date of the matters they deal with. These characteristics readily apply to documentary texts whose potential ability is especially desirable in those fortunate instances when they are found, in the course of a controlled excavation, together with other archaeological material; their possible contribution to dating the artifacts from the same stratigraphic units or the structures or houses themselves does not need any further explanation here. In the present section, I will concentrate on the ostraka from Bīr Shawīsh (with a single exception all from House 3); I will present an overview of the systems of dating these documents often contain and will provide an interpretation of their dates. I will also discuss the dating provided by other groups of archaeological evidence, such as pottery and coins. Finally, I will examine our possibilities in using all our dated material to complement and corroborate their information.

There are three distinctive systems of dating appearing in our ostraka; they are regnal years, indiction years, and the Egyptian civil calendar of twelve months with numbered days.

#### **4.1.1. Regnal or era years**

To start with the first, regnal years appear rather rarely in our corpus and they are not, in actuality, regnal years of any ruling potentate. There is in fact only one ostrakon from House 4 that contains high double-digit numbers accompanied by the sign in the shape of L that is widely used in documentary papyri and ostraka for ἔτους “in/of the year”. Since the first examined occurrence in **1** is followed by a month and day, there was no doubt this sign does in fact introduce a year. In the same probative case of **1** (there, the date appears twice), the numerals are furthermore followed by the sinusoidal curve (S), as is typically the case in fourth-century regnal dates. It should be noted

that the sign L precedes the numeral in both cases and that the numeral in both cases is detectably followed by ς.<sup>80</sup>

One thing is immediately striking. The numbers attested in our No. 1 are too high to be regnal years of any ruling emperor.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, they must be years of an era. While the Era of the Martyrs was counted from the ascension of Diocletian in 284/5 CE (hence also, the Era of Diocletian), it was not used in ordinary documentary texts written in Greek before the Arab conquest.<sup>82</sup> We might be dealing with a different era, widely used in the Oxyrhynchites, hence called the Oxyrhynchite Era.<sup>83</sup> This era also started as the regnal era of a reigning emperor, namely of Constantius II (made Caesar by his father on 13 November 324). Constantius added himself to the sequence of regnal years of co-reigning emperors that had started during the Constantine I's last regnal year for dating official documents. This resulted in a sequence of numbers of regnal years of respective co-*caesares* and co-*augusti*. When Constantine I died, his years were continued together with the years of living emperors and were dropped only after Constantius II associated Julian with himself in dating formulas. In the manner the years of Constantine I had been continued after his death, so were the years of Constantius II, together with the years of Julian, while the latter was still alive; and when Julian himself died, the combination of the regnal years of the two emperors continued to be used in Oxyrhynchos. And it is only at this moment that we can speak of the first true Oxyrhynchite era year – year 40 of Constantius II and year 9 of Julian (i.e., 363/364 CE). In sum, what started in 336/337 as regnal years of Constantine I (jointly with other four sovereigns, including Constantius II), developed into regnal years of

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<sup>80</sup> For the idea presented in a structured manner, see Table 5 below. In another case of 16.2., the year is written out in full as ἔτου (for ἔτους), followed by a low numeral without the sinusoidal curve; this I take as denoting an indiction year.

<sup>81</sup> Regnal years are discussed at length in BAGNALL & Worp, *Chronological Systems*, pp. 43–54, with tables and citations on pp. 223–251.

<sup>82</sup> BAGNALL & Worp, *Chronological Systems*, p. 64.

<sup>83</sup> A detailed discussion of the era, with charts, see in BAGNALL & Worp, *Chronological Systems*, pp. 55–62.

Constantius II and Julian to, ultimately, become a true era following the death of the latter in 363/364 CE, from which point the regnal years no longer referred to any living emperor. For reasons that are not sufficiently understood, the era of Constantius II and Julian continued to be used in Oxyrhynchos until well after the Arab conquest.

Because the Small Oasis was administratively integrated with the Oxyrhynchites and the shortest connection between the Nile Valley and the Oasis linked the Small Oasis naturally with Oxyrhynchites, it seems justified to seriously consider the use of the Oxyrhynchite era also in the Small Oasis. This suggestion was first formulated by G. Wagner in his edition of the ostraka excavated in the Oasis before WWII by A. Fakhry.<sup>84</sup> The one problematic aspect of this identification is that there is never any second regnal year in the dating formulas from the Small Oasis – neither in the texts published by Wagner, nor in the two occurrences presented here. Still more intriguing is the fact that, with one doubted exception, there would be no other published occurrences of the single Oxyrhynchite era year numbers outside of the Small Oasis.<sup>85</sup> But since the posthumous reckoning by Diocletian has to be excluded from our considerations of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century material as too early and the era of Constantine I is nowhere attested to go beyond the year 49, taking these single-digit dates as the era years of Constantius II seems very plausible. We might, then, add the practice of single-digit dates to the local oasisitic idiosyncrasies. A piece of supporting evidence for the use of the Oxyrhynchite era in the Small Oasis can lie in the correlation of the era years with the indiction years (see the section below).

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<sup>84</sup> See WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 87.

<sup>85</sup> The single-digit dates are discussed in BAGNALL – Worp, *Chronological Systems*, p. 58; the only other example introduced there is *PSI VII 783.11*. The caveat of single regnal/era dates is repeated in Worp, A Note, p. 171 (discussing *O. Bahria Div. 8*), and *O. Trim.*, pp. 20–22 (there, the documentation concerns the Great Oasis and the year numbers attested are much lower).

It remains to be noted that the era years in Egypt were set within the framework of the traditional civil year, starting on Thoth 1 or 29 August of the Julian calendar.

| Ostrakon | House | Exact Form | Year (Computed in CE) |
|----------|-------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1.1,4    | 4     | Ⲛ ⲟⲩⲥ      | 403                   |

Tab. 5: Regnal or era year dates in O. BirSh.

#### 4.1.2. Indiction years

The second system of dating is represented in our texts much more frequently. It is the indiction that counted years within fifteen-year cycles (initially fiscal).<sup>86</sup> The fifteen-year indiction system was adopted around 313, with the first indiction cycle beginning in 312, but it was introduced in different nomes at a varied pace. It is safe to maintain that “it is not until the 350’s [...] that the indiction starts to be used more generally for dating”.<sup>87</sup> As it is apparent from Index IB, all indiction years are represented in our ostraka (only Ind. 2 in **7conv.5** is not certain).

While the documentation from Alexandria and Memphis and the whole of Upper Egypt seems to point to the start of indiction years on Pachon 1 (i.e. 26 April), it was common in the Oxyrhynchite and Herakleopolite nomes to date documents by an indiction year starting on Thoth 1 or 29/30 August.<sup>88</sup> This means that, in the Oxyrhynchites, the indictions were reckoned on the

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<sup>86</sup> The study of the complex and confusing use of indiction years in papyri actually prompted BAGNALL and Worp to write their *Chronological Systems*, where the indiction is thoroughly discussed on pp. 22–35, or up to p. 42, to include the “new indiction”.

<sup>87</sup> BAGNALL & Worp, *Chronological Systems*, p. 26.

<sup>88</sup> The use of the indiction years in these nomes is discussed in BAGNALL & Worp, *Chronological Systems*, pp. 30–33.

basis of the Egyptian civil year (see below), which – as we saw – was also the case with the Oxyrhynchite eras. In the Oxyrhynchite nome, then, both the era and the indiction counted years within the framework of the traditional civil calendar. And as it was with the era dates, we might be inclined to believe that the Small Oasis followed Oxyrhynchos in adhering to this practice as well, although there is no secure evidence at hand.

There are rare, fortunate instances in the papyrological material when one text is simultaneously dated according to the indiction and an era. Computing precise dates given in either system and comparing those dates with each other should prove or disprove that a certain era is used (provided that we know the start dates of the era and of the indiction). Wagner could perform this kind of correlation of dates on one single text (*O. Dor.* 2) and he was able to confirm that the dates (Oxyrhynchite era year 87, indiction year 9) match. The documents from Bīr Shawīsh provide exactly one more instance when both dates are included as part of one date (1).<sup>89</sup> In 1.4 the phrase reads (ἔτους) οἰ πρώτη(ς) “in the year 79, the first (indiction year)” which is further specified by the month of Mesore on line 1; when computed, the dates do match, giving both the year 403 CE. Our no. 1, therefore, constitutes another supporting evidence for the use of the Oxyrhynchitic era in the Small Oasis in the very beginning of the fifth century.

Although there is no such instance in our corpus, a word is due concerning double dates that do not match, i.e. the indiction and era dates that, when computed, give different exact dates. It is not uncommon to encounter blunders in papyri; and while some of the problems of mismatched dates have to do with modern editors misreading the texts, in other instances, scribes did actually slip. However, one should blame a scribe only as a last resort. In that instance, it is probably more likely that a scribal dating error occurred in the era

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<sup>89</sup> No. 16 is dated by an indiction year, while it contains a reference to another year for which a payment in oil was received, but even though the very word ἔτους(ς) is employed, it most likely denotes an indiction too.



year than in the indiction, as the indiction years were locally more important and thus better known.

#### **4.1.3. Egyptian civil calendar**

The least complicated of the three systems is the civil year. Little had changed in the way the Egyptians organized their civil calendar. The traditional Egyptian year was solar and was divided into three seasons with four numbered months each, and five extra (*epagomenal*) days of festivals at the end. Greeks gave these months distinctive names that later made their way into the Coptic calendar where they are preserved to our day. Because this solar year was about a quarter-day shorter than the real solar year and thus moved gradually backward at a pace of one day per four years, leap years were created under Octavian by adding one more (sixth) epagomenal day every four years. Since then, the beginning of the civil year was fixed to Thoth 1 or August 29 (or 30, in leap years, falling in the Julian year before that in which the extra day is added today at the end of February).

The very nature of our present documentation is the main cause of the fact that the summer months occur most frequently in our texts (see Index IC), as summer was the period of intensive agricultural activities (including harvest) and, consequently, of payments in kind.

## 4.2. COMMODITIES AND MEASURES

Due to their nature, ostraka attest to many commodities and measures. We shall now review these commodities, discuss their roles in the local economy, and consider the metrological aspects – mostly by comparison with other documentation from late antique Egypt.

This overview does not attempt to capture the ancient agrarian production in the Small Oasis. One has to be aware of two aspects of our evidence for agrarian economy. One is the generally idiosyncratic, biased nature of papyrological evidence, the existence, survival, and ultimately recovery of which is significantly determined by historical and archaeological factors.<sup>90</sup> The second reason is more locally specific and has to do with the workings of the ancient local economy: textual evidence was created only for those products that were marketed or used to pay taxes and rents. This obviously adds greatly to the distortion of any lived realities as viewed through the lens of surviving textual evidence, as will become more evident in the following overview. And, of course, our new set of data is too small and accidental to be looked at as a representative of the Oasis as a whole or even of the site itself.

Commodities encountered in our texts are almost exclusively an object of local transactions, mostly payments for leased land or agricultural farm. These documents seem to reflect the internal economic transactions of an agricultural estate. It should also be noted that some commodities did not make it to our texts (or not as often as others), because they were not being used as payments or because people would secure their supplies privately. As a result,

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<sup>90</sup> This is not to say that our papyrological evidence is entirely a result of accident. For an argument against such notion, see BAGNALL, *Everyday Writing*, Chap. 4. In our case, we simply should not forget that the important factors include ancient documentation realities, subsequent preservation of documents, and, finally, archaeological excavation (i.e., choices and performances of modern excavators).

the documents cannot provide a faithful picture of local agricultural production. Some commodities can be over-represented, some under-represented.

To avoid any misunderstanding before we engage in the next section, the Small Oasis did and still does almost entirely lack agriculture. What we find in our documents (and in the Oasis itself to these days) is instead, strictly speaking, arboriculture and horticulture; it is rather tree and garden crops than arable field crops; the “farmers” would rather work in *hortus* and *pomarium* than in *ager*.

#### 4.2.1. Grains

Among the products most commonly encountered in the ostraka is grain – wheat and barley. Because the production of grain in the Small Oasis was always rather limited, it had to be supplied from the Nile Valley in exchange for products typically grown in the Western Desert, such as dates, wine, olives, and cotton. Although a prominent medium of taxation (in the Valley, anyway), the amounts of grains mentioned in our texts are indeed rather small. As is the case with other commodities, we have no records of transportation of large volumes of grain in O. Bir Sh.

Both wheat (σίτος, most likely *triticum durum*)<sup>91</sup> and barley (κριθή, *hordeum vulgare*) are typically measured in *artabas* (ἀρτάβαι), occasionally supplemented by *matia* (μάτια) or *modia* (μόδια) or *choinikes* (χόινικες). The

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<sup>91</sup> Apart from the explicit mentions of wheat as σίτος there are three occurrences of the sign 𐀓 that, in the earlier documentation, stands for πρρϝ ἀρτάβ-, but we do not know just how it would be vocalized in late antique Greek documents from Egypt, since it has been established that σίτος had largely supplanted πρρός as the word for wheat by the third fourth of the fourth century. Indeed, the word πρρός itself does not occur in O. Bir Sh. at all.

For the displacement of πρρός in papyrological documentation, see CADELL, Renouveau; R. BAGNALL in *P. Col. VII*, p. 109; and, marginally, also MAYERSON, *σίτος/πρρός*, p. 53, and CLARYSSE, *Artabas of Grain*, p. 105.

relationship of *mation* to artaba is not obvious here; *mation* is generally known to be a tenth of an artaba in Roman and Byzantine periods.<sup>92</sup> But in texts from the Great Oasis, we find *mation* equal 1/23 or 1/22 of artaba; so far, this fraction seems to be a peculiarity of the Dakhla Oasis,<sup>93</sup> although there may be one possible hint in our corpus of the fraction being used also in Baḥrīya.<sup>94</sup> As for *modion*, this unit of measure is attested with wheat in **11.3** complementing artabas; the relationship to artaba is generally 10 *modii* for 3 artabas. Number **7conv.5** further attests to the use of *modii Italici* in El-Ḥāyz. This grain measure has so far been known in the papyrological documentation only from *O. Douch* (III 220.5; 335.4–5; IV 397.5; and V 512; 565; 578; 583; 586; 627) where it is consistently spelled as μόδιον ἡταλικόν. The relationship of *mod. Ital.* to artaba is not obvious from our receipt for wheat; but the editor of *O. Douch* IV was able to suggest the relationship of 1 art. to 12 *mod. It.*<sup>95</sup> Whether the same relationship did in fact exist in the Small Oasis remains to be clarified by possible new evidence. It should however be noted that the reading of our **7conv.5** is difficult. And finally *choinix* – previously known as a graph from O. Dor. 1.3, 5 – is attested in the receipt **9.5**. This unit, recognized by the government (unlike the Persian artaba), is known to make 1/40 of an artaba in the Roman period.<sup>96</sup>

Since Pharaonic times, wheat and barley in Egypt were largely sown and reaped together as a maslin to the degree that even the words σῖτος and πυρός of Greek documents do not necessarily denote pure wheat but rather a mixture of grains in which wheat was only the dominant grain, with about 10% of non-wheat elements that had to be removed (by fastidious sieving) for the

<sup>92</sup> BAGNALL, *Practical help*, p. 186, with a reference to the Coptic μαχε.

<sup>93</sup> See *KAAB*, pp. 47–48. In *O. Trim.* I 12.5,6 the *mation* at 1/23 artaba is further specified as “by the local (measure)” τοπικῶ (μέτρῳ).

<sup>94</sup> Our **8.3** contains a record of 1/24 artaba of wheat. While this may have equaled one *mation* by the local standard, it must be remembered that 1/24 is a standard fraction in general.

<sup>95</sup> Wagner used the evidence from *O. Douch* IV 397.5 of a monthly ration of 2 *mod. It.* and of an annual ration of 2 artabas attested for the same person (Myron) in *O. Douch inv.* 89–514, which provided him the following equation: 2 art. = 24 *mod. It.*, hence 1 art. = 12 *mod. It.*

<sup>96</sup> BAGNALL, *Practical help*, p. 186.

wheat to be regarded as refined, pure (καθαρός).<sup>97</sup> Considering that the refined wheat was specified as such only when necessary (for taxes, e.g.) and that the use of the explicit name for a mixture, ῥυπαρός, was considerably uneven in time and place, we should probably understand any mention of σῖτος as referring to unrefined, mixed wheat; at minimum, we cannot consider σῖτος or πυρός refined unless labeled as such (σῖτος/πυρὸς καθαρός). In O. Bir Sh. there are no qualifiers used for either wheat or barley, and I do refer to them as monocrops, while the reader has to keep in mind what was said about mixtures.

One wheat receipt is most likely for 3 artabas (12), another one for 13 artabas and 35 matia as a rent payment (6); No. 7 is a rent receipt for unread volume of wheat in *modii Italici*; No. 9 is a receipt for ½ art. and 8 *choinikes*; yet another text is a receipt for a payment of land-tax in wheat – 2,5 and 1/24 of artaba plus one more artaba (8).

In neither of the two documents mentioning barley did its amount survive; in both the account and the receipt, μάτιον is used as a unit of weight measurement (4; 11).

Finally, there is one uncertain mention of *sitokrithon* (σιτόκριθον) in 10.3–4; it is a receipt, potentially for rent payment, where the amount is most probably five *matia*. Being a combination of words for wheat and barley, this *sitokrithon* could mislead us to see it as an attestation to the aforementioned practice in Egypt of sowing wheat together with barley, as might be the case with κριθόπυρον in Ptolemaic documents.<sup>98</sup> In reality, σιτόκριθον most probably refers to combined payments in wheat and barley rather than to a mixture or maslin of the two grains. To support this interpretation one can cite documents where amounts of both wheat and barley are introduced separately

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<sup>97</sup> On the issue of unrefined wheat and the equivalent meaning of σῖτος and πυρός, see MAYERSON, σῖτος/πυρός.

<sup>98</sup> On this meaning of κριθόπυρον in Ptolemaic texts, see MAYERSON, Three Pharaonic Crops. The author also makes it clear that the Ptolemaic κριθόπυρον is not equivalent to the late antique σιτόκριθον (Ibidem, p. 210); he later refines his view in MAYERSON, σῖτος/πυρός, pp. 52–53, by stating that the Roman period attestations of σῖτος and πυρός often express the same idea as the Ptolemaic κριθόπυρον, namely a deliberate mixture of wheat and barley.

only to be subsequently summed as *sitokrithon*. Among such examples are *CPR* IX 30, *O. Douch* III 218, *O. Douch* V 565, 578, and probably also *O. Waqfa* 8, 28, the edited text of which has been extensively restored. Proceeding from the other end, *P. Sorb.* I 61 is even more instructive, as it presents payments for the tenth and eleventh indiction of 2 ½ art. of *sitokrithon* and 13 ½ art. of *sitokrithon*, respectively, summed up as 16 art. of *sitokrithon* and explained as comprising “namely 8 art. of wheat (σῖτος) and 8 art. of barley (κριθή)”. In sum, our *sitokrithon* is not either an intentional mixture of wheat and barley or a maslin; rather, it describes a sum of separate volumes of the both crops when counted together. It may still be worth investigating just why in many instances of the documents dealing with *sitokrithon* is there no indication of the ratio of the two crops, given the assumption that wheat was the more valuable of the two.

#### 4.2.2. Chaff

As a separate commodity in our ostraka we also find chaff (ἄχυρον). It is measured in *mandakia* (sg. μανδάκιον), a measuring unit attested so far in the fourth through eighth century documentation only with blades of flax (*CPR* XIV 5.16; *P. Hamb.* I 21.5), νειλοκαλάμης (reed? *P. Laur.* III 75r.22,v2) or, most frequently, hay (*P. Oxy.* L 3570.8; *P. Palau Rib.* 37.2; *Stud. Pal.* VIII 1001.3–4, e.g.). *Mandakion* is a diminutive of μανδάκη “bundle” and is thus employed where μώιον or δέσμη is used in the Great Oasis material.

The transactions attested in our ostraka include a receipt for rent paid exclusively in chaff – 2 *mandakia* (13). The second text is probably an account where chaff is included together with barley and lentils; the volume of chaff seems to be a number of tens ending with “one”, most likely 71 (4.3). Finally, 34 is an order for delivery of two *mandakia* of chaff “for the landlord’s share”,

where the word “share” (μέρος) describes shares of outgoing payments to one’s landlord (γεωδῆχος).

One may wonder about the uses of what could seem to be a useless leftovers of grain production. But chaff was hardly an unavoidable by-product of an essential food crop, as our documents suggest. Whether collected from threshing floor or gathered in the fields separately from the grains,<sup>99</sup> it could be used as litter or fuel, but also as fodder and, perhaps, also for making gypsum plaster.

#### **4.2.3. Legumes and other vegetables**

A significant part of foodstuffs in the Middle East to our days and important source of fodder, legumes and other kinds of vegetables must have been widely grown and consumed in the Small Oasis. Their scanty appearance in documentary texts is most probably due to the fact that they were not commercially farmed, nor were they a medium of taxation, and were produced for local consumption only, often in smaller private gardens. We can certainly blame these factors for the near absence of any legumes or other vegetables in O. Bir Sh.<sup>100</sup> The only likely attestation of legumes is in the account 4.4 where we find lentils measured in artabas, but the volume remains unread.

More vegetables could be implied in our documentation in the appearance of oil, as we shall see further below, under “oil” (4.2.6.).

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<sup>99</sup> For the latter, see several documents from within *P. Cair. Isid.*

<sup>100</sup> The situation is not much different in Dakhla Oasis as viewed through *KAAB* and *O. Kellis*.

#### 4.2.4. Dates

Although popular and practically omnipresent in Baḥrīya until these days, dates (φοίνικες, sg. φοῖνιξ) appear very seldom in the papyri. This probably most iconic product of the oasis today turns up only once – in **21**, which is probably a receipt issued for the farmer Abraham son of Jacob; there it appears together with cotton, but the quantity of the dates or the purpose of the payment remains unread.

We can assume, nevertheless, that dates served as sweetener (a cheaper alternative to the otherwise more common honey) and belonged to the few oasis export products, as is still the case today. Their rare occurrence within our text corpus can only be explained by the fact that our documents deal with transactions inside the economy of an estate where dates would turn up only sporadically.

#### 4.2.5. Wine and other vine products

It has been convincingly argued that grapes and wine (οἶνος) ranked among the most prominent products of the oasis agrarian economy as documented through Greek papyrological sources.<sup>101</sup>

Our material from Bīr Shawīsh, moreover, coincides chronologically with the virtual disappearance in the fourth century of beer (ζῦτος) from papyrological documentation from Egypt. Although we lack any conclusive explanation or detailed examination of the subject, the total disappearance of beer can be linked to the simultaneous shift in surviving evidence away from

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<sup>101</sup> Thus, e.g., WAGNER, *Oases*, pp. 299–301. For a general account of Egyptian wine production, see SCHNEBEL, *Landwirtschaft*, pp. 239–292; a recent treatment of wine production and consumption in Graeco-Roman Egypt is DZIERZBICKA, *Wine*. HICKEY, *Wine, Wealth, and the State* is a detailed study of viticulture and estate economy on the estate of the Flavii Apiones in late fifth through early seventh century Oxyrhynchos.



villages occupied predominantly by lower echelons of society to *poleis* with middle and upper-class Greek or Hellenized landowners who were much more likely to prefer wine to beer.<sup>102</sup> But even this *caveat* seems not enough to explain the lack of any evidence for beer in our written sources past the fourth century, reflected also in our ostraka.<sup>103</sup> The shift from beer to wine must have been more general, the obvious implication being higher demand for and thus higher production of wines.

It is surprising, then, that there is so far only one document from within O. Bir Sh. containing a reference to wine production or consumption (1). This seems even more surprising when we consider the known fact that wine would typically serve as a commercial article and a medium of tax and other payments. Ostrakon 1 is an account or receipt mentioning the delivery, *inter alia*, of “new (wine)” ([οἶνος] καινός) and “(wine) lees” (τρυνγία). Indeed, wine in this document is never mentioned explicitly, while “new” could equally apply to, e.g., oil,<sup>104</sup> and “lees” can denote wine lees as well as olive oil lees. But it is the context that signals we are in fact dealing with vine products.

The mention in 1.7 of new wine very well corresponds with the destination place of this wine delivery, which is a further unspecified *heliasterion*. Being an appurtenance of wine-making complexes, *heliasterion* would typically serve as a repository for new wines in their last stage of production. *Heliasterion* can be described as an enclosed open-air storage area where amphorae with new wine would be placed after the first phase of fermentation process; the new wine would then remain there for slightly over one year, during which period of time it was subject to filtering and further unspecified actions of moving and oiling (or sealing).<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Suggestion made in BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 32.

<sup>103</sup> Search in PN yielded no mention of beer securely dated after 400 CE.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. καινὸν ἐλαίου κεράμια in *O. Kell.* 73.3.

<sup>105</sup> Description based on DZIERZBICKA, *Wineries*, p. 85. D. Dzierzbicka in this study on wineries in Graeco-Roman world provides a thorough analysis of our evidence for the wine-making process and examines individual appurtenances of wine-making complexes, including *heliasterion* on pp. 77–87. For the earliest mention of *heliasterion* (which appears to be a

Ostrakon 37 might also refer to wine and/or vintage of grapes. Its seriously faded surface provides us, on the concave side, with the unit of measure *half-kadion*, fully spelled-out as ἡμικάδ[ (see the discussion of *half-kadion* under 1, where the measure was resolved only tentatively); on the opposite side, it also mentions a vintage (τρύγη), an activity that would typically take place in August and September.<sup>106</sup>

In sum, these two ostraka are the only pieces of evidence for wine-production process at the site or its vicinity to date. No traces of a wine-making complex were detected in archaeological evidence from Bīr Shawīsh to date. The closest material remains of a winery are thus located almost 5 km south-east of the site, at El-Rīs, where the SCA mission under Z. Hawass partially excavated a wine-producing district following its discovery by the SCA inspectors in 1988.<sup>107</sup>

#### 4.2.6. Oil

Oils in late antique Egypt were extensively used in food preparation and served as a component of military rations (*annona militaris*).

It has already been mentioned that oils of our documents may somehow relate to vegetables. The reason for this is that, against common expectation, the oil we find in the papyrological documentation is predominantly a vegetable oil, made from vegetable seeds.<sup>108</sup> It is very often not clear, however, what oil crops were used in making a particular oil

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Greek invention) in textual sources from Egypt, see a Demotic deed of conveyance from Sebennytyos, *P. dem. Gieben* 2, and the annotated edition in VANDORPE & CLARYSSE, Greek Winery (pp. 129–130 in particular).

<sup>106</sup> On vintage, see, e.g., SCHNEBEL, *Landwirtschaft*, pp. 275–276.

<sup>107</sup> Preliminary publication in HAWASS, *Golden Mummies*, pp. 164–166.

<sup>108</sup> Such is the case of, e.g., the documentation from the Appianus estate in the third-century Theadelphia (cf. RATHBONE, *Rationalism*, p. 216).

referenced in our papyri, while it is obvious that production of specific oils varied throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. There was a wide variety of oils grown under the Ptolemies, who regulated the production in great detail,<sup>109</sup> and then under the Romans. The problem is that any oil is usually identified simply as ἔλαιον. Some assume that the vegetable oil was mostly made from radish (only occasionally identified more precisely as ἔλαιον ῥαφάνινον),<sup>110</sup> others suspect an otherwise uncertainly identified *lachanon*-seed (λαχανόσπερμον).<sup>111</sup> This *lachanon* (in sing.) was tentatively suggested by Roger Bagnall to denote “a variety of lettuce cultivated for its seeds”;<sup>112</sup> a proposition later revised by its author in the light of new evidence from Mons Claudianus and the Monastery of Phoibammon in favor of sesame, meaning that the σήσαμον of the Ptolemaic documentation might be the λάχανον of the Roman papyri.<sup>113</sup> This would mean that the most frequently attested oil-producing vegetable of our period was not a variety of lettuce, but rather sesame, which after all dominated the oil production, together with croton, already in the Ptolemaic period.

As for the much more palatable and expensive olive oil, it can in general be securely identified only when it is further described by a modifier such as “good” or “healthy” (χρηστόν).<sup>114</sup>

Previous evidence of oil from the Small Oasis includes 3 occurrences in the corpus published by Wagner; two of them are receipts for unspecified

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. SANDY, *Vegetable Oils*.

<sup>110</sup> Thus, e.g., MORELLI, Λαχανόσπερμον, and HICKEY, *Wine*, p. 32; contra BAGNALL, *Vegetable Seed*.

<sup>111</sup> Thus, e.g., BAGNALL, *ELA*, pp. 27–28, 30.

<sup>112</sup> BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 28.

<sup>113</sup> For the argument and references, see BAGNALL, *Vegetable Seed*.

If the assumption is correct, it is not the only case when one word would replace another word in denoting the same produce in Ptolemaic and Roman documentation, the other case being the afore-mentioned “wheat”.

<sup>114</sup> The most recent book-length study of oleoculture in Eastern Mediterranean is Tomasz WALISZEWSKI, *Elaion: Olive Oil Production in Roman and Byzantine Syria-Palestine*, Warsaw: University of Warsaw (PAM Monograph Series, 6), 2014. *Non vidi*.

quantity of the “public oil” (ἔλαιον δημόσιον; *O. Dor.* 2 & 3) and one is similarly a receipt for unread number of *ch(oes)* of oil (*O. Bahria div.* 10).

Within the *O. Bir Sh.* corpus, oil appears in six documents, four of which are receipts. Although it comes with no qualifiers, I would suggest we might interpret it as olive oil – for two reasons: first, olive oil does not always appear with a distinctive identifier; second and more importantly, olives and olive oil were and still are typically oasis products. In fact, olive oil used to be such a speciality of the Small Oasis that it appears labeled as such in the Roman period documents from Oxyrhynchos where it gets called Ὀασετικόν, Ἀμμωνιακόν or Ἀφροδισιακόν (*PSI* III 203.5–6; *P. Oxy.* 1293; *P. Oxy.* 2423v; *P. Oxy.* 2783.6–9).<sup>115</sup> We can also make a reference to apparent archaeological remains of olive oil production at a site to the south-east of El-Rīs in the El-Ḥāyz Oasis, where visitors are confronted with 3 large mill-stones that most likely served pressing olive oil. These stones in fact gave the site its modern name of Ṭāḥūna. The occupation (and hence, perhaps, also the oil production) seems to have continued there up to the Mamlouk or even Ottoman period.<sup>116</sup>

Yet, our 2.2 seems to read ῥ]αφανίνου; this leads me to expect ἐλαίου in the lacuna on the preceding line; consequently, I take it as the only attestation for a vegetable oil in our corpus, this one being from radish. I would also argue that this seldom example of a qualifier attested with oil to distinguish it as a vegetable oil confirms the suspicion that the occurrences of oil with no qualifiers in our documents are more likely those of olive oil.

The measure used in all four of the read instances in *O. Bir Sh.* is the *chous* (χοῦς),<sup>117</sup> a unit of liquid or solid volume typically equivalent of 6 *sextarii*, the size of which corresponds to 0.54 liter.<sup>118</sup> Number **15** is a receipt for rent payment of 3 *choes* of (olive) oil; two more receipts, possibly for rent

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<sup>115</sup> After WAGNER, *Oasis*, pp. 296–299.

<sup>116</sup> For the date estimated on the basis of pottery finds, see MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 23b. However, it is date stones apparent in thick layers on the surrounding surface.

<sup>117</sup> Due to this new evidence, I would suggest to resolve the measure in *O. Bahria div.* 10 as χ(οῦς).

<sup>118</sup> BAGNALL, *Practical Help*, p. 188.

payments, include **12** mentioning the delivery of 4 *choes* and **16** with volume preserved only partially and being possibly 9 or 11. Another possible receipt is **14** referring to 1,5 *chous* of oil. The fifth and last attestation within the corpus appears in **3**, probably an account, where both the volume of oil and the unit of measurement remain unread. For a tabular representation, refer to the following table.

| No.   | Form                 | Unit | Volume  | Names (paid by   to)      | Date                      |
|-------|----------------------|------|---------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2.1–2 | [ἐλαίου   ῥ]αφανίνου | —    | —       | —                         | Thoth 1                   |
| 3.2   | ἐλέου                | —    | —       | —                         | —                         |
| 12.2  | ἐλ(αίου)             | χοῦς | 4       | Lalachios   ?             | 9 <sup>th</sup> ind.      |
| 14.4  | ἐλέου                | χοῦς | 1.5     | Abr. s. Jacob   Pa...     | 9 <sup>th</sup> ind.      |
| 15.5  | ἐλέου                | χοῦς | 3       | Abr. s. Jacob   Theon     | 11 <sup>th</sup> ind.     |
| 16.2  | ἐλέου                | χοῦς | 9 or 11 | Abr. s. Jacob   Theon (?) | 11 <sup>th</sup> ind. (?) |

Tab. 6: Attestations for oil in the ostraka.

#### 4.2.7. Cotton and dress

A specifically oasite product was cotton. While the seasonal Nile inundation would impair growing this summer crop in the Nile Valley, specific climatic and hydrologic conditions meant that cotton was particularly well suited for cultivation in the Western Desert oases. It was recently argued – on the basis of textual and archaeobotanical evidence – that cotton in fact stood in the center of the oasite economy of the Roman period.<sup>119</sup>

Cotton production of the Roman and Byzantine periods has been well attested from the Great Oasis at the sites of Kysis (modern Douch), Kellis, and Trimithis, both in texts and in archaeobotanical remains. With the first published texts, however, came a riddle concerning the unit of measurement,

<sup>119</sup> Cf. GRADEL, LETELLIER, & TALLET, Coton.

abbreviated mostly as  $\lambda\theta( )$  but also as  $\lambda\iota( )$ . This otherwise unknown unit first occurred in the material from Kysis (*O. Douch* I 51) and was resolved, not without hesitation, as  $\lambda\acute{\iota}\theta(\omicron\varsigma)$  “stone” by the editor who later, in his *Les Oasis d’Égypte* (pp. 292–293), considered the same unit in other texts only to conclude that it might indeed be taken as “stone”. A decade later, the editor of *KAAB* re-examined the matter in detail and was able to argue that the measure intended in the texts might in fact be *lithos* or its diminutive, *lithion*,<sup>120</sup> and that *lith( )* should not be corrected as a misspelling for *litra* “the Roman pound”.<sup>121</sup> This notion later received further support due to the two attestations of *lith( )* within the Trimithis ostraka (38 and 44) which also confirmed the conclusion – made in *KAAB* only tentatively – that the fraction system used with the “stones” is based on 10 Roman pounds, resulting thus in one stone equaling about 3.23 kg.<sup>122</sup> Based on the amounts of cotton attested, the editors of *O. Trim.* I also suggested “a larger place for cotton in the agriculture of the oases than previously suspected”.<sup>123</sup> This last aspect received special attention in a recent study of the cotton cultivation in late antique Egypt; the authors of the study scrutinized textual, botanical, and archaeological sources and were able to assess the central role of cotton in the oasisite economy of the Roman period.<sup>124</sup>

The published documentary texts and the recent scholarship on the subject have thus established the important place of cotton production in the economic life of the Western Desert oases; they also shed light on the identity of the unit of measure as attested in the Great Oasis.

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<sup>120</sup> In his consideration of *O. Kell. I* and with a reference to *O. Douch* V 634.6, Worp suggests that the correct complete form of the contracted  $\lambda\theta( )$  might always be  $\lambda\acute{\iota}\theta\iota\omicron\nu$ , rather than  $\lambda\acute{\iota}\theta\omicron\varsigma$  (Worp, *Greek Ostraka*, p. 3n.11). The full reading in *O. Douch* V 634.6 was first published and commented on by the editor of *O. Douch* V (commentary *ad* 634.6 and p. VI of the Introduction). The entire word is under-dotted.

<sup>121</sup> *KAAB*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>122</sup> BAGNALL & RUFFINI, *O. Trim. I*, p. 42, and commentary to the individual texts. The fraction system first suggested in *KAAB*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>123</sup> BAGNALL & RUFFINI, *O. Trim. I*, p. 42.

<sup>124</sup> GRADEL, LETELLIER, & TALLET, *Coton*, esp. pp. 126–129.

As for Bahṛīya, the only previous evidence, in the papyrological documentation, for cotton in the Small Oasis is probably a reference made in a business letter *SB* VI 9025 (i.e., *P. Mich. inv.* 3630) of a cotton *chiton* (ὁ χιτὼν ὁ ἐρεόξυλος) and warp thread (στήμων) to be sent from Oxyrhynchos, most probably, to the Small Oasis.<sup>125</sup>

In the Bīr Shawīsh ostraka, cotton appears in six documents, all of which are probably receipts. Where preserved and readable, the unit of measurement employed is always *li*( ), mostly written as a graph λ. We do not know whether the Small Oasis used the same measure for cotton as the Great Oasis, where the abbreviated “stones” are generally written with *theta* (λίθ[ ]) so as to make it clear that we are not dealing with “pounds”, which is what the *lambda-iota* graph λ normally means. Consideration of the very small amounts of cotton attested in our ostraka could, nevertheless, suggest rather “stones” (containing about 10 pounds). However, given the absence of the *theta* to signal to the reader that it is “stones”, we cannot be certain that Roman pounds (λίτραι) are not meant in our case anyway. In fact, we need to assume that these actually are pounds, which is what I take the λ to mean in the present edition.<sup>126</sup> It should also be noted that there are λίτραι used with other commodities in one ostrakon from Bahṛīya published by Wagner.<sup>127</sup>

These are the mentions of cotton in O. Bir Sh. Number **17** is a receipt issued for Isidoros for 8 *li*( ) of cotton. Another three receipts were issued for the tenant farmer Abraham son of Jacob: **18** attests to his delivering of 4 *li*( ) of cotton possibly as the landlord’s share, while both the amount and the unit of measurement remain unread in the two other receipts **19** and **21**. The remaining receipt on **20** mentions a variegated tunic or cloak (στιχάριον) and the distribution of unread amount of cotton where also the unit of measure remains

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<sup>125</sup> Newly published and scrutinized in BAGNALL (*SB* 6.9025).

<sup>126</sup> Suggestive of the difference between *li*( ) and *lith*( ) are the instances in *O. Douch* I (nos. 51 and 53) where we find volumes of cotton in *lith*( ) and of meat (by conjecture) in *li*( ), respectively, first of which must stand for stones and the other one for pounds, as it is in fact presented by the editors.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *O. Bahria* 3 (fodder or chaff).

unread. It is impossible to say if this cloak was an actual piece of garment or its monetary value (see also under 4.2.9 and 4.2.10).

| No.  | Form       | Unit  | Volume | Names (paid by   to)     | Date                  |
|------|------------|-------|--------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 17.4 | ἐρε(ο)ξ( ) | λί( ) | 8      | Isidoros   Troilos       | 7 <sup>th</sup> ind.  |
| 18.5 | ἐρεοξύ( )  | λί( ) | 4      | Abr.   Papnouthis / Isak | 14 <sup>th</sup> ind. |
| 19.5 | ἐρε[       | –     | –      | Abr. s. Jacob   Hilaros  | ? ind.                |
| 20.3 | ἐρεοξύλ( ) | –     | 20 (?) | Heirs (?) of Timotheos   | Epeiph 28             |
| 21.4 | ἐρεοξ( )   | –     | –      | Abr. s. Jacob   Isak?    | 13 <sup>th</sup> ind. |
| 48.7 | εἰρεω( )   | λί( ) | 2 (?)  | Isak (?)                 | –                     |

Tab. 7: Attestations for cotton in the ostraka.

#### 4.2.8. Livestock and other animals

From the animal family, only piglets or suckling pigs appear in our ostraka, the attested word forms being χοιροδέλφαξ and a diminutive δελφάκιον.

In the same time, we lack any mentions of goats, sheep, camels or even donkeys. The latter two can be explained by the simultaneous lack of any evidence for transportation, while the cattle probably did not make it to the textual sources because it did not feature in the transactions of the *oikos*.

#### 4.2.9. Chickens and eggs

Chickens always appear together with eggs in our documentation and are almost always abbreviated as ὄρ( ). In two instances, however, are they written out in full, which makes it possible to conclude that ὄρνεον is the correct



resolution here rather than ὀρνίθιον.<sup>128</sup> The issue of the two possibilities of how to resolve ὄρ( ) has been discussed for the past twenty years or so, as new evidence of abbreviated ὄρ( ) has been coming down from different sites in the Western Desert. Receipts with securely attested ὄρνεον come also from the Great Oasis (*O. Kellis* 61.2 and 287.2; *P. Kell.* IV Gr. 96.450), where, in the same time, we also find ὀρνίθιον written out in full (*O. Kellis* 64.3; 65.3; *O. Trim.* I 18.4; 287conv. 3). Both chickens and eggs appear counted; except for one text referring to 3 and another one referring to 2 chickens, they always appear as single chickens accompanied by ten eggs, no more or less.

Among the earlier attestations of chickens (and eggs) in the papyrological documentation from the Small Oasis are ostraka excavated by A. Fakhry and edited by G. WAGNER in his *Les Oasis d'Égypte*. The chickens in these ostraka are always abbreviated as ὄρ( ) or ὄρ( ). Of these only *O. Bahria div.* 4 is a list of personal names supplemented with respective amounts of securely attested both chickens and eggs,<sup>129</sup> while *O. Sarm.* 11 is a receipt for one chicken (the rest is lost), *O. Sarm.* 10 is a receipt for two chickens (the following line is lost), and *O. Sarm.* 7 is apparently a complete text, which still contains one chicken only, as is the case also with *O. Bahria* 2.<sup>130</sup> It is with these texts, that Wagner first makes the assumption (*Oasis*, p. 105 [ad *O. Bahria div.* 4] and 277) that the mentions of ὄρ( ) in the Baḥrīya texts represent ὄρνεα rather than ὀρνίθια, while referring especially to *O. Bahria div.* 4 where chickens are listed along with eggs. It is not apparent whether or how much this suggestion owes to his mentioning the possible tax payment in ὄρνεα καὶ ᾠά as discussed by Lallemant.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Our 27 contains ὄρνεον (for the correct ὄρνεον); 3 contains ὄρνεα (for the correct ὄρνεον).

<sup>129</sup> On top of this one, I would also consider reading it in *O. Bahria div.* 7.3: ὄρ(νεον)] ἔν ᾠὰ δέκα in place of παρέσχ]εν ...

<sup>130</sup> I have serious doubts about Wagner's assumption, ad *O. Bahria* 2, that the *praepositus* actually refers to a *praepositus pagi* and, thus, implies a much later date for the ostrakon. A military *praepositus* seems more probable.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. LALLEMAND, *Administration*, p. 195.

There are eight documents within O. Bir Sh. that refer to payments or deliveries of chickens and eggs. Six of them are receipts, one is an order, and the identity of another one is not known due to the poor state of preservation of the respective sherd. Among these, **25** and **27** are receipts for one chicken and ten eggs issued for the tenant farmer Abraham son of Jacob, while **23** is a receipt for the same commodities issued for Abraham who might in fact be the same person; in the second of them the full word for chicken is recorded (ὄρνεων, for the correct form ὄρνεον). No. **26** is a receipt for the priest (?) Jacob attesting to his delivery of one chicken and ten eggs. Another receipt was issued for an Isak (No. **11**); this time, two chickens are recorded, while any possible reference to eggs is lost in the lacuna. No. **24** is a receipt for a liturgist (?) whose name is lost; it was issued for three chickens and, again, ten eggs only. The only order to pay one chicken and ten eggs is No. **35**, issued for Isak son of Elias; it contains a fully written word for chicken (ὄρνεα, for the correct form ὄρνεον). The last to be introduced is No. **28**; we cannot tell whether this is a receipt or an order, but it similarly contains a mention of just one chicken and ten eggs.

| No.    | Form        | Count     | Names (paid by   to)      | Date                      |
|--------|-------------|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 11.4   | ὄρν( )      | 2         | Isak   Theopemptos        | 9 <sup>th</sup> ind.      |
| 23.3   | ὄρν( ) / ὠά | 1 + 10    | Abr.   Joseph             | 8 <sup>th</sup> ind.      |
| 24.4   | ὄρν( ) / ὠά | 3 + 10/15 | –                         | 13 <sup>th</sup> (?) ind. |
| 25.5   | ὄρν( ) / ὠά | 1 + 10    | Abr. s. Jacob   Theon     | 5 <sup>th</sup> ind.      |
| 26.4   | ὄρν( ) / ὠά | 1 + 10    | Jacob   Elias             | 15 <sup>th</sup> ind.     |
| 27.4   | ὄρνέων / ὠά | 1 + 10    | Abr. s. Jacob   Isak (?)  | 12 <sup>th</sup> (?) ind. |
| 28.2   | ὄρν( ) / ὠά | 1 + 10    | –                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> ind.      |
| 35.5–6 | ὄρνεα / ὠά  | 1 + 10    | Isak   Theopemptos        | 6 <sup>th</sup> ind.      |
| 36.4   | ὠόν         | 9         | Abr. s. Jacob   Timotheos | –                         |
| 40.2   | ὠόν         | 1         | Abr. s. Jacob   ?         | ? ind.                    |

Tab. 8: Attestations for chickens and eggs in the ostraka.

The fairly standardized number of chickens and eggs in these documents make one suspect that we are looking at a specific payment or tax, possibly even not in kind but in cash money. A tax payment in chickens and eggs was in fact discussed and suggested in 1964 by LALLEMAND (*Administration*, p. 195) who makes a reference to one such example recorded in *P. Sakaon* 92.9 (in her days known as *P. Warren* 7), where two men, Hērōn and Kannaōūg, are presented tax-receipts for different tax payments they had made on behalf of the villagers of Theadelphia, one of them (for the tenth indiction, tenth year) being partially in ὄρνεα (here, “birds”) and φά.<sup>132</sup> The same text, however, contains also fractions of linen garment, a variegated tunic (στιχάριον). This makes the editors suggest the correction in ὀρνέων and φῶν and taking the associated numerals as talents.<sup>133</sup> LALLEMAND, although she does not seem to reflect on that, in fact makes a separate mention of a tax in chickens and eggs converted to cash money, with reference to *P. Oxy.* XVI 1905.16 where, however, the reading of ὄρνεα is by no means secure.<sup>134</sup> Wagner in his turn, in his comments on the fiscal administration of oases, does not doubt the document *O. Bahria* div. 4 is a charter with tax payments,<sup>135</sup> while taking the attestations of chickens without eggs as payments in kind.

So, are we dealing with a tax in cash money, or a rent or other payment in kind? And how do we tell it is a monetary value in one case and an actual bird in another? At minimum, the case of *P. Sakaon* 92 cited above suggests that payments in chickens and eggs could mean cash money, because it is certainly the case with the fractions of clothes in the same receipt. I am inclined to assume that payments in chickens and eggs do represent a specific payment: they are very standardized and occur with different payers. In the same time, however, I do not see sufficient evidence to assess how exactly we should understand individual cases. Therefore, I prefer to take mentions in O.

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<sup>132</sup> See published and commented in *Warren Papyri*, pp. 20–22.

<sup>133</sup> *Warren Papyri*, p. 22.

<sup>134</sup> LALLEMAND, *Administration*, p. 200.

<sup>135</sup> WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 277.

Bir Sh. of chickens and eggs as referring to actual commodities, not to their monetary equivalents.

#### **4.2.10. Money and monetary economy**

Building up on what has just been said about the possible monetary transactions *en lieu* of actual commodities (and *vice versa*), we shall conclude this section with a few remarks on cash money and monetary economy as reflected in our material from Bīr Shawīsh.

Despite the fact that the use of money is attested by actual finds of the fourth- and fifth-century coins at the site, our texts do not contain any explicit mention of money at all. This disconnection between the textual accounts and the numismatic archaeological evidence might not be as striking as it may seem. Indeed, the local ancient economy was agricultural and the exchange and payments were typically made in agricultural products. O. Bir Sh. 3.2 seems to reflect one monetary transaction after all, as it contains a mention of myriads (originally used of 10,000 multiples of *denarii*, but more likely to refer to a coin in this period – Aes 3)<sup>136</sup> for a commodity which remains unread, followed by “oil” which we can expect to have a monetary value expressed as well, but it remains unread.

But a more intricate problem of our documentation lies in the fact that some products could be equivalents for a sum of money or, conversely, cash money could be expressed in kind, for it has been established that agricultural or other goods were, at times, equivalents of pecuniary value. This value would be typically calculated and stated in contracts, the kind of documents we lack at Bīr Shawīsh (they would be most probably on papyrus).

The fractions of garment referenced in 4.2.7 were apparently its cash equivalent, but there is no way of knowing whether it is also the case with the

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<sup>136</sup> See BAGNALL, *Currency and Inflation*, pp. 12 & 45.

variegated cotton tunic in our 20.2, in other words: whether the transaction involves an actual piece of garment or rather cash money equivalent of its value (however calculated). It is similarly conceivable but impossible to verify at the moment, whether the contracts of chickens and eggs (or some of them) involved transmission of actual commodities or rather an equivalent sum of money – be it a form of ὄρνεα καὶ ᾠά tax or not (cf. 4.2.9).

I would also suggest that transactions in kind were more frequent on the level of local economy of individual estates, as might be the case in our O. Bir Sh., while money payments are more likely to appear in transactions with the outside world, including the tax payments to the state.

### 4.3. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

In this section, we shall examine our texts as to their references of the state administration (offices and officials) and more local management of the estate (οἶκος). This will provide us with glimpses of the social-economic texture at late antique Bīr Shawīsh, especially of the tenant-landlord relationships and the estate management. More than in other parts of this work, it needs to be stressed here that the evidence at hand gives us access to only one unit of a larger estate, and, on top of that, an incomplete one.

#### 4.3.1. State administration

It has long been established by N. LEWIS (Four Cornell Papyri, pp. 27–30) and D. HAGEDORN (Quittung), and subsequently reviewed and restated by G. WAGNER (*Oasis*, pp. 259–261) that the Small Oasis always formed a separate, independent nome, while, at the same time, the administration of the Oasis was integrated with the administration of the Oxyrhynchite nome. When exactly this administrative union of the two individual nomes occurred remains to be clarified, and our present texts do not shed any more light on the issue. From the documents quoted and examined by the abovementioned scholars it appears that the union was not a reality as early as in 28 CE<sup>137</sup> but that it definitely existed in 70/71 when we see the two nomes share the same *agoranomoi*.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. the dedication from Psobthis examined by WAGNER and published in his *Inscriptions grecques*.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. *P. Oxy.* 2349.24, 36, 44. Implications of the fact were published by HAGEDORN (Quittung).

We shall now turn to our ostraka to review what information they provide on the state and local administration. To do so, we shall look for any mention of officials and offices.

First and perhaps most obviously (when we talk about officials), there is an *officialis* (ὁφφικιάλιος) mentioned in 44.2. He might well belong to an office of a civilian institution, but we have no means of telling (see under 4.6.2).

Second, there is a *praepositus* (πραιπόσιτος), attested once, in 15.3–4. However, this mention is most probably not of a *praepositus pagi*, a civilian liturgical official from the metropolitan curial class who was nominated by the βοθλή and whose responsibility, after a new administrative system reporting to the *logistes* had been introduced in 303, was to govern a *pagus* (a subdivision of a nome created in 307/8), supervise tax collection, and appoint village officials.<sup>139</sup> As it is examined further below, under 4.6.2., this *praepositus* was rather military, even though the absence of his name is quite evocative of an official whose name does not need to be expressed.

Another office (certainly civic, in this case) mentioned in the ostraka is one of *pagarchos* (πάγαρχος). This official is known to have superseded *praepositus pagi* who is not attested after 365. The new official exercised the same duties consisting of governing a respective *pagus* (a subdivision of a nome) and reporting directly to the *logistes*. While it is obviously not true that “the pagarch (*pagarches* or *pagarchos*) first appears in our sources toward the end of the fifth century” (FALIVENE, *Geography and Administration*, p. 535), there has been discrepancy in the papyrological documentation between the date of creation or introduction of this official and the first attestations for the fiscal office this official exercised, with the very term *pagarchia* appearing first in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (MAZZA, *Ricerche sul pagarca*, p. 172). The earliest published attestation of a *pararchos* seems to be *O. Dor. 5* dated to 407/8. Our two or

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<sup>139</sup> For two more mentions of a *praepositus* from the Small Oasis, see *O. Bahria* 2.2–3, 16.1 dated to the second half of the fourth century; the editor interprets them as denoting a *praepositus pagi* (WAGNER, *Oasis*, pp. 89 & 270).

three new occurrences fall into the same time period and contribute, thus, 300% more to the earliest mentions of the office.

Our document **5** is a memorandum issued by a pagarch for a liturgist Apollon son of Thonios; the pagarch's name does not appear, neither does the name (or, more likely, the number) of the respective *pagus*; both were probably evident. The other two texts are receipts issued by the pagarch Isak for the tenant farmer Abraham son of Jakob (**27** and **29**). While **27** is clearly for chicken and eggs, the commodity in **29** remains unread.

Our three occurrences of *πάγαρχος* are not only the earliest attestations of the official (together with *O. Dor.* 5), but also attest to the subdivision of the Oasis into pagi, though we do not know what they were and we lack any mention of them in our documents (they would appear under numbers).

Finally, in **35** we find a word “brother” (*ἀδελφός*). The document is an order issued by a Theopemptos for Isak son of Elias to provide a “brother” whose name remains unread with one chicken and ten eggs. While the word *ἀδελφός* itself is fairly common in papyrological documentation and is known to mean “colleague” in any official or private organization, we might want to ask whether this particular person belongs to a civilian office or is a colleague-agent of the estate exercising some role in the operations of the estate. But I do not seem to find enough convincing evidence to prefer either.

We can conclude that our texts contain one certain reference to a civilian official (*πάγαρχος* of **5**, **27** and **29**), two probable references (*ἀδελφός* of **35** and *ὀφικιάλιος* of **44**) and one quite improbable reference (*πραιπόσιτος* of **15**). In the same time, we need to acknowledge the complete absence of any village civilian official in our texts. This latter point may lead us to think of the settlement not as a village but rather an *epoikion* managed (and perhaps even established) by a private investor. Such a speculation, however, would reach beyond the scope of this work and our present understanding of the site and the both textual and archaeological evidence.



Our search into how the administrative structure of the country and the Oasis mirrors in our ostraka made us realize just how little our documents reflect affairs beyond the workings of the estate. The estate and people associated with the estate management shall be our next point of focus here.

#### 4.3.2. Local *oikos* management

Certainly the most frequently encountered in our documentation among the people of different ranks, statuses, and occupations, are mentions of farmers, more specifically (sub-)tenant farmers (γεωργοί). Strictly speaking, only one person is explicitly identified as a tenant farmer – Abraham son of Jakob. In the same time, only one person is identified explicitly as a landowner – Isak; and we might want to ask whether he is the same as the *pagarchos*. But there are numerous interactions with other people too.

Most of “the others” appear to be landlord’s middle-men, his agents managing the estate on the behalf of the absentee owner. Although they are mostly not designated as agents, they are also not identified as landlords themselves, and the context makes their intermediary role obvious.<sup>140</sup> But it is also fairly conceivable that one tenant farmer would lease land from more than just one landlord at a time.

One aspect of this complex relationship deserves a note in particular. In the only two extant examples of agents openly acting on behalf of their master, these agents turn out to be priests – Theon (in **15**) and Papnouthios (in **18**). In both instances, the landlord is the Isak mentioned above, and the tenant is our Abraham. This brings us back to the question already raised in the commentary on **15.1**, namely the apparent role of clergy in what were date-to-day private business matters.

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<sup>140</sup> One more possible landlord (not identified explicitly as one) might be Troilos in **17** and **34**, unless he is an agent too.

Wolfgang Liebeschuetz wrote: “... a landowner had since AD 371, at the latest, been responsible also for the taxes of those of his tenants, whose tenancies were entered on the tax register as part of the estate. So it became normal for the landlord to collect the tax owed by the tenants at the same time as the rent. Estate accounts do not normally distinguish money collected as rent from money collected as tax.”<sup>141</sup> Indeed, this is precisely the ambiguity we face with of our ostraka. According to thesis of “fiscal participation” formulated in 1985 by Jean Gasco, <sup>142</sup> large landlords divided public fiscal charges among themselves creating thus a system of shares; they took up fiscal liabilities of non-elites. It can be then difficult to differentiate, from the receipts at hand, the payment of a share (μέρος) by a tenant farmer and a rent payment (φόρος), especially when the time of the payments would coincide.

As the administrative system based on town councils and liturgical services was weakening, the magnates would gradually become providers of public services and willingly fill the gap later in the fifth century. The case has been well demonstrated in the example of the Apiones, who would collect taxes of their own tenants, but who were also responsible for collecting taxes from some private properties they did not actually own. This made them imperial agents of a sort. Among our texts, there are only two explicit mentions of the “landlord’s share” (γεουχικὸν μέρος, in **18** and **34**); it was paid by the tenant farmer Abraham son of Jakob to his landlord Isak through the priest Papnouthios as an agent, and ordered by Troilos to Isidoros to pay it to an Amonios, respectively.

While there appears to be one receipt for a land-tax (**8**), we lack any other explicit mention of a tax; and since the word φόρος appears only four or five times, it is not immediately evident whether the other payments to the landlord are rent payments for leasing an agricultural firm, or shares of tax liability. The usual phrase ὑπὲρ ... ἰνδικτίονος can signal either.

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<sup>141</sup> LIEBESCHUETZ, *Decline and Fall*, p. 184.

<sup>142</sup> See GASCOU, *Grands domaines*.

A few more points merit our attention here. First, it is striking that in the region so heavily dependent on the availability of water, we do not find any reference in our ostraka to water-management, which had to be the *alpha* and the *omega* of the local economy. The single possible hint of irrigation works is the account of jars intended for irrigation (in **1**, see the commentary there).

It has been mentioned that people beyond the Isak–Abraham circle appear quite frequently in the ostraka. Among them, an Apollo (spelled as Ἀπολλῶς, Ἀπόλλων and Ἀπολ( )) makes six showings including on two oil lamps (I. Bir Sh. **3** and **4**) and a receipt for wheat delivered to Isak (? in **9**), and is very likely a tenant farmer too. Since these references of Apollo come from the material recovered from the same archaeological context as those of Abraham, one may be prompted to wonder as to the actual occupant of House 3. Here, we need to perhaps consider different patterns of (co-)habitation. Partial or shared ownerships of a single house are in fact attested more often than undivided ownerships of a house in the papyrological documentation from Roman Egypt. It is especially in the census declarations that we find people who more often own a share of a house, or even of several houses (cf. *SPP* XX 29 V). It is true that most of this evidence comes from urban environment and that rural areas are underrepresented. Anyway, our case does not concern ownership but tenancy; and considering the size of the structure, it is conceivable to think of the situation as a shared tenancy.

Of a special interest is an explicit mention of δέσποινα in **19** and **22**, which most probably stands for “a female landholder”<sup>143</sup> and is rather unusual. This is not to say that land owning women were seldom by any means in late antique Egypt, as they are believed to constitute between 1/6 and 1/4 of landowners in the third century.<sup>144</sup> However, the very fact that the connection

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<sup>143</sup> That this is not in fact οἰκοδέσποινα “mistress of the household” or a wife of a landlord is evident from the completely preserved text of **22**. An οἰκοδέσποινα is mentioned in *P. Kellis* IV 96.334, 1145.

<sup>144</sup> See BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 130. For female property owners, see D. W. HOBSON, “Women as property owners in Roman Egypt,” in: *TAPA* 113 (1983), pp. 311–321; ROWLANDSON,

between a γεωργός (itself a denomination of a “tenant farmer”) and a landowner is stated explicitly and thus highlighted prompts some questions; even more so, that this person is female and she is never introduced by name. She is always associated with a tenant farmer Abraham. One can state at least general points on the identity of the *despoina*: It is highly probable that the land came to her by inheritance and that leasing it out would be the easiest possible way of managing the land ownership, though not without possible complications. The fact that her name is never given indicates that her identity within the estate economy was self-evident by simply mentioning her as a female land-holder, the same way a *geouchos* generally did not need to be named.

The same word δέσποινα appears in invocation phrases like δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου referring to the Virgin Mary, but we need to dismiss that as irrelevant in the given context and too late, as the earliest attested occurrences of the invocation date to the sixth century. Also improbable are references to the empresses who are given the title of δέσποινα (attested in petitions): Arkadia (the consort of Zenon) in the mid-fifth century and Aelia Endokia (the wife of Theodosios II) between 426 and 475. In any case, it remains a question whether the article should be restored to read γ. τῆς δ.; in my translations, I do use the definite article on the assumption that the absence of any personal name strongly suggests that the person was well known, she was the only one of her kind within the *oikos* and her identity could not be confused.

Since Δέσποινα does not appear in TM People or LGPN Online, we may need to exclude the possibility that we are actually dealing with a personal name here (although it appears with no definite article). Used in modern Greek and Macedonian (Деспина),<sup>145</sup> this is a rather obscure appellation in Antiquity

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*Landowners and Tenants*, pp. 113–115. Female tenants, on the other hand, are very rare (see ROWLANDSON, *Agricultural Tenancy*, p. 154–155).

<sup>145</sup> I have no knowledge of how or when the name started to be used in modern Greek and Macedonian, but the suspicion is that it is only a matter of modern naming practice.

that belongs, in Arcadian cults, to a daughter of Dēmētēr and Poseidōn and was also used as an epithet for Persephonē (“the queen of the underworld”), Hekatē, and Aphroditē (see *Der Neue Pauly*, III 424; IX 602–3; V 268–9; and I 838–841, respectively). Notable, hence, is her association with mysteries and the ghostly underworld. The use of this mythological divine name or epithet in a late antique setting would lead us to see it as yet another example of the archaizing aspects of the oases’ culture (cf. under 4.4.).

Apparent existence of middle-men and agents acting on behalf of the landlords seems to point to a larger estate managed by tenants who would not deal with their landlords directly, but rather through the agents of the landlords. Unfortunately, no leases came down to us to date to give us a better understanding of the actual size of the estate and of the arrangements between the owners and the tenants. In the same time, we know nothing of the local standards in managing land ownership to be justified in making an estimate of the estate(s). The existence of agents is also suggestive of the owners being absent – living in the oasite metropolis of Psobthis in the north of the Small Oasis, or even in the Nile Valley (in Oxyrhynchos, e.g.).

Besides the well attested agrarian production, our archaeological evidence and possibly also one text (1) attest to large-scale ceramic production at the site. Material remains of pottery kilns were detected at ten different locations around Bīr Shawīsh, including an area about 100 m southwest of House 3 and another near House 1 (ca. 800 m north of House 3). These two production areas consist of several mud-brick structures, possibly including also storage and drying facilities. The kilns in the area near House 1 were excavated and assessed to consist of two linear kilns with one shared fireplace.<sup>146</sup> Text 1, then, is a personal account of a potter listing outgoings of jars.

More specific information on individual tenants, landlords, and the middle-men is contained within the overview of names with a few

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<sup>146</sup> For a description, see MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, p. 33 (the area near House 1 is mistakenly said to be west of House 3).

prosopographic notes under 4.4. below. Meanwhile, in a separate section I will introduce one special profession.

### 4.3.3. *Agrophylax*, the field-guard

There are three mentions of ἀγροφύλαξ “field-guard” in our ostraka and they all pertain to a Timothy (36; 22; 20). Two fundamental issues need our attention here: first, the actual meaning of the designation and hence also the responsibilities of an ἀγροφύλαξ; second, the position of the official in the socio-economic structure of late antique Bīr Shawīsh. These questions are intertwined and will be addressed side-by-side.

Early occurrences of ἀγροφύλακες are rare but existent: late second century “Leon the field-guard” in *SB XVI 12579.6–7* (i.e. *P. Mich. inv.* 1683, published by YOUTIE in *ZPE* 34 [1979], p. 99) or even from the first century (*P. Lugd. Bat.* XIII 6.2; dated palaeographically).<sup>147</sup>

It is, however, only in the fifth century and still more in the sixth and seventh centuries that ἀγροφύλακες appear more frequently. The occupation is thus mostly attested in the Byzantine period documentation, perhaps due to the assimilation of the duties of field-guard with the Roman *stationes agrariae*, responsible for the surveillance of the countryside.<sup>148</sup> Assistants to or agents of the police liturgists, they were the local representatives of the public police. Indeed, most of the existing compounds of the word φύλαξ indicate liturgies, but they also include private guards.<sup>149</sup> As for the specific case of ἀγροφύλαξ, the question remains open as to whether it ever was a denomination for a

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<sup>147</sup> The latter contested by J. BINGEN (*CdÉ* 81 [1966], p. 190), but defended by BONNEAU (Ἀγροφύλαξ, p. 304).

<sup>148</sup> BONNEAU, Ἀγροφύλαξ, p. 305.

<sup>149</sup> Cf., e.g., the recent summary in DRECOLL, *Liturgien*, p. 165. Simple φύλακες are always liturgists (ib., p. 174).

private guard.<sup>150</sup> Evidence gathered by E. R. Hardy and introduced in his *Large Estates* suggests that field-guards of the sixth century were used on large estates of private land-holders who in turn would “compensate them for guarding [their] property, but more often [they] would come in contact with them merely as coloni”.<sup>151</sup> This means that even if the term ἀγροφύλαξ had not been (or had not become) a denomination of a private guard, we would still find ἀγροφύλακες working for estates. As for our early fifth-century evidence, it seems to stand rather on the side of private employment, as we see the guard (or his heirs) receiving a compensation in kind. Whether we should consequently consider the title more a profession or occupation than a public office is not necessarily implied, especially when the causal link between the title ἀγροφύλαξ and the received payments can be contested.

A related issue here concerns the actual meaning and hence the correct translation of the term. It was argued by Danielle Bonneau in 1988 that ἀγροφύλαξ is more specifically a guard of artificially irrigated fields (from ἀγρός “originally uncultivated, artificially irrigated land”), as opposed to a seemingly synonymous πεδιοφύλαξ who would be in charge of inundated fields (from πεδίων “inundated plain”).<sup>152</sup> This distinction is now undermined by the evidence from *P. Mich. inv. 476* (edited and analyzed by M. Sampson)<sup>153</sup> where, paradoxically, four “πεδιοφύλακες have been contracted to protect an irrigation-machine (μηχανή) and an ἀγρός (instead of the expected πεδίων)”. The Michigan papyrus is dated to 558 CE when the πεδιοφύλακες were more and more seldom, giving way, in papyrological documentation, to ἀγροφύλακες. Therefore, the question stands whether this mid-sixth century

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<sup>150</sup> BONNEAU (Ἀγροφύλαξ, p. 305) seems to favor this view, *contra* WÖRPER in his commentary on *P. Vindob. Worp* 3.15 (pp. 32–33).

<sup>151</sup> HARDY, *Large Estates*, p. 64. The view of public officials becoming private employees on the large estates in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> c. is held by WÖRPER (*P. Vindob. Worp*, p. 32) who suggests their official employment continued from the 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>152</sup> See BONNEAU, Ἀγροφύλαξ, pp. 307–310.

<sup>153</sup> The edition is currently under review for publication in *BASP*. I acknowledge the author for sharing with me his unpublished paper; the following quote is from his manuscript.

document is evidence for a possible shift in their respective responsibilities, or whether the two terms were simply equivalent (by the sixth century or had always been). Papyrological documentation on the subject is ambiguous, far from conclusive.

There is no evidence of ἀγροφύλακες in the earlier documentation from the Small Oasis. From the Western Desert as a whole, there are only two attestations of the term from Kellis (Ismant el-Kharab) in *PN. O. Kell.* 64.6 dated 317/8 contains a garbled form of the term used as an identification of a person called Psenamounios, who writes a receipt for an unspecified number of chickens and three *tiphagia*. The editor seems to dismiss the possibility that this ἀγροφύλαξ is in fact a police officer, but it is not immediately obvious why he thinks that “one hardly expects a police man signing such a receipt”.<sup>154</sup> The other piece is an account on the first clay tablet to be found in Dakhla, *P. Bingen* 116 (dated between 200 and 399); there, possibly three mentions of the term appear (lines 2, 13, and 14). Also in that text, the guard(s) is/are to receive certain products.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, in neither of the two texts is the role of the guard specified in any way.

Our new evidence from Bīr Shawīsh does not bring much light into the scene either, because, in fact, the fields at the site were not and could not, by default, ever be irrigated by a flood; hence a mention of an ἀγροφύλαξ is not probative, although it could be taken to confirm the distinction proposed by Bonneau. Nevertheless, I would be inclined to a general conclusion that the terms πεδιοφύλαξ and ἀγροφύλαξ were used to designate personnel guarding fields – whether artificially irrigated, or flooded. Translation by “field-guard” is correct in any case, as it does not specify the kind of land guarded; for that matter, “country-guard” may be even more appropriate.

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<sup>154</sup> Worp, *O. Kellis*, p. 71. The exact form is ἀγραφυλη.

<sup>155</sup> MELAERTS, *Papyri*, pp. 471–485. The mention, in our **22**, of heirs of a guard, who is not in fact introduced by a name, adds more weight on the side of the restoration – only suggested in the commentary on the text on pp. 475–6 – to read the line 2 as κληρον(όμοις) ἀγρο(φύλακος), suggested to Worp by the volume’s editor H. Melaerts.



Although it is not obvious what exactly was the responsibility of our Timothy the field-guard, in the both better preserved cases is he receiving (or is to receive) certain products from the hands of the tenant farmer Abraham son of Jacob. Beside the fact that the status of a tenant farmer itself implies an existence of a landlord, there is also a direct mention of a γεωδχος in **20** on whose behalf, as we can expect, Abraham conducts the transaction. If the payments in kind are a form of compensation for services related to Timothy's occupation, it would suggest that Timothy is paid for guarding the fields belonging to Abraham's landlord and, hence, was a wage laborer on his estate. While in one or two of the three documents from Bīr Shawīsh we either see Timothy involved only indirectly (and with the implication of his death; **22** and, possibly, **20**) or the text is not dated (**20**), he was apparently still alive when **36** was issued; and because his heirs received a payment for the 12<sup>th</sup> indiction, as we know from **22** dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> indiction, we can expect that Timothy still lived in the year of the 12<sup>th</sup> indiction and must have died between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> indiction. The year of the 15<sup>th</sup> indiction attested in **22** serves, in the same time, as the *ante quem* for the undated **36** and possibly **20** as well.

#### 4.4. PERSONAL NAMES

Documentary texts such as those presented in this volume are rich in references to people; they inform of their activities but also provide us with anthroponyms.<sup>156</sup>

In O. Bir Sh., we can see that documents typically mention the issuer (not necessarily the writer, when a scribe does the writing) and the addressee. Occasionally also an intermediary is introduced or a third party on whose account a payment is due or made, most often a landlord or a superior on whose behalf a middle-man acts. We sometimes also encounter a person writing the text for an illiterate individual (**18** and, possibly also **16**).<sup>157</sup>

We shall now review all extant anthroponyms, grouping them according to their origin or meaning.<sup>158</sup> I do realize that it is not possible to assess the onomastic character of El-Ḥāyṣ from a humble group of 50 texts; even if we were to include into the set the ostraka published earlier by Wagner (or others, considering the evidence from the Valley), the corpus is still too small. When considering the Bīr Shawīsh anthroponyms, one needs to be also aware that they come from a single house. What follows is notes on the present evidence which can eventually contribute to a more representative assessment of names in the Small Oasis. The names within the categories are listed

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<sup>156</sup> For all names listed alphabetically with references to ostraka, refer to Index II.

<sup>157</sup> In **18**, the formulation is ἔγραψα ὑ(πὲρ) αὐτοῦ γράμματα μὴ εἰδότης. The name of the person who writes for someone else is not necessarily mentioned.

<sup>158</sup> For the first and only comprehensive treatment of oasis onomastics, see WAGNER, *Oasis*, pp. 222–249; unfortunately, his prosopography of the oases referenced throughout the book is not included in the volume neither has it been published received separately. In addition, a vast number of new documentation came down from the oases since the publication in 1987 of Wagner's book; for an up-to-date onomasticon for the Great Oasis, see *Onomasticon Oasiticum*, available on-line at [http://www.media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/onomas\\_final.pdf](http://www.media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/onomas_final.pdf).

according to the English alphabet, with original actually attested forms given in the text.

## 1. Names formed on Egyptian gods<sup>159</sup>

### Ammon<sup>160</sup>

Attested once is Ἀμώνιος (*ḳmwnjs*, *NBDem.* 18), a name based on the Libyan version of Amoun and very common also in the Great Oasis. The compound name formed also with the Hellenistic god Sarapis, Σαραπάμων appears also once, but can be probably supplemented by a contracted name Σαρ( ).

### Horus

Ancient Egyptian deity *Hr* makes fairly good showing, featuring in three different names: the simple Ὅρ (likely an abbreviation for, e.g., Ὄρος) appears once, so does the Greek derivative Ὄριων (*hr*, *NBDem.* 786); rather special is occurrence (although uncertain) of Ἐρφβήκις (a form of the correct Ἀρπβήκις; *hr-bjk*, *NBDem.* 799) meaning “Hor-the-falcon”.

### Isis

The popular goddess of the Hellenistic period makes rather humble showing in only one name – Ἰσίδωρος “gift-of-Isis” (*ḳjsjtwr̥s*, *NBDem.* 2) attested three times, with the same person. The name is amply attested throughout the Graeco-Roman period.

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<sup>159</sup> Where available, references are given to *Demotisches Namenbuch* (*NBDem.*), including the form in Egyptian.

<sup>160</sup> On theophoric Ammon-names in the oases of the Western Desert, see WAGNER, *Oasis*, pp. 229–232.

Sarapis<sup>161</sup>

The fairly common composite Sarapis-Ammon name is attested once in its single-*mu* form Σαραπάμων. Another attestation on the same potsherd is questionable (see commentary to I. Bir Sh. 1).

Thoōnis

This not clearly identified divinity (probably built on *dwn* “to stretch out” – cf. Coptic ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ) provided one attestation of the name Θώνιος, a name quite common at Oxyrhynchos in the Roman Period.<sup>162</sup>

Tutu

Rather speculative is the occurrence in one incised inscription of the name Τίθοης, in the form of (Copticized?) ΤΟΙΘΟΗ (*twtw*, *NBDem.* 1273).

## 2. Names formed on Greek gods

Apollo

Two forms of the divine name are represented: Ἀπόλλων with three occurrences in the ostraka and Ἀπολλῶς with two occurrences on the oil lamps. The abbreviated Ἀπολ( ) incised on a fragment of a vessel could stand for either form.

Heracles

Ἡρακλείδης, a derivative form of the mythical hero's name, is attested twice.

## 3. Egyptian names other than theophoric

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<sup>161</sup> For some analytical thoughts on this compound Sarapis-name, see CLARISSE & PAGANINI, *Personal Names*, pp. 82–87.

<sup>162</sup> See YOYOTTE, *Notes*, pp. 423–426.

No non-theophoric names of Egyptian origin appear in the ostraka except those which will be introduced within the Christian names below.

#### 4. Other Greek names

Alexander: The Macedonian dynastic name Ἀλέξανδρος appears once.

Chares: The sole appearance of this name in 9.4 is not certain. The name is attested in Egypt from the Ptolemies to later 4<sup>th</sup> century, including a handful of showings at Kellis (*O. Kellis*; *KAAB*).

Hector: Ἑκτωρ makes one showing, with an elite figure.

Hilaros: Ἰλαρος “the cheerful” appears twice.

Lalachios: Very rare name Λαλάχιος occurs once; the only other mention in the Small Oasis and the whole of *TM People* being in *P. Mich. inv.* 4008 (= *SB XXII 15768.3,12*) dated 364 CE.

Theos

Two names formed on the Greek word “god” are represented: Θεόπεμπτος (attested twice or thrice, the same person) and Θέων (attested three times, twice explicitly as a name of a *presbyter*, although the name itself is without the specific connotation of either traditional or Christian milieu as we know it from the Egyptian *noy-te*-names).

Troilos: Rather rare, Τρώϊλος appears twice, the same person.

#### 5. Roman or Latin names and their derivatives

Rufinos: The only Roman name, a derivation of the cognomen Rufus (meaning “red-haired”), is Ῥουφῖνος, appearing once, as the name of a *presbyteros*.

## 6. Biblical and Christian names

As a separate category of names, we shall consider biblical (including the both Testaments) and otherwise Christian names. Linguistically, they are Hebrew, Egyptian, and Greek in origin.

### Old Testament

Hebrew (and Aramaic) names from the Old Testament include the most frequently attested names of all. They make up 40 to 44 occurrences in our ostraka and belong to five individuals: Ἀβραάμ with 12 to 14 attestations belonging to a single person, a tenant farmer; Ἡλίας appearing once or twice; Ἰσάκ appearing six or eleven times, also as a landlord; Ἰακώβ making up to sixteen showings, and Ἰωσήφ appearing twice.

### New Testament

The group of New Testament names includes two inscribed names Πέτρος and three occurrences in the ostraka of Τιμόθεος. We can also include Rufinos (see above, listed under Roman and Latin names), as it was borne by several martyr-saints of the early church; this made it a good Christian name.

### Abstract Terms

One single name from the separate category of abstract terms is Εἰρήνη, a name formed on the concept of “peace” and making one showing.

#### “God”-names

The last group within this section consists of two names formed on the Coptic Egyptian word for God, π.νοϣτε, reflecting the new linguistic and religious reality and indicative of Christian character – as opposed to the earlier *ntr*. Παπνοϣθις appears three times as a name of a *presbyteros* (*p<sup>c</sup>-p3-ntr* “The-one-of-God” – cf. Coptic ϣενοϣτε), Ψεβεπνοϣτις (*p3-šr-p3-ntr*, *NBDem.* 236; “The-son-of-God”) appears once. Into the same category probably belongs also the name Θεόπεμπος (“The-son-of-God”; attested twice or thrice) already indexed under 4.

One aspect of the oasite onomasticon, however fragmentarily represented in our text corpus, deserves a separate commentary. Within the category of Greek names we find two or three with rather archaizing connotations, names we would not expect in our fourth/fifth-century context. They refer to archaic heroes, gods and historic figures of the classical era; they are Ἑκτωρ, Ἡρακλείδης, and Ἀλέξανδρος, the first of which is not attested in papyrological documentation after 100 CE, the second quite frequent but classicizing, and the last one referring to the great conqueror of the East. It has been observed that there was a tendency in the oases to give rather obsolete, classicizing names which do not appear in the documentation from the Valley.<sup>163</sup> Olaf Kaper suggests that this tendency can be a part of a more general “historical interest (of the oasites) in the local past” and reflect a distinct cultural identity that manifested itself also in temple decoration and other aspects of literary and material culture.<sup>164</sup>

Names can certainly mirror social realities, most prominently the religious identity. The focus of the following section is the religious identity of

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<sup>163</sup> For the first time, probably, observed on the textual material from the Great Oasis and published by Wagner in his *Les Oases*, pp. 224–226.

<sup>164</sup> KAPER, *Oases*, pp. 726 & 729. The issue is further discussed by R. BAGNALL in his paper *Dakhla and the West*, pp. 42–43.

the ancient dwellers at Bīr Shawīsh. And the names have a story to tell about the religious affiliation of their bearers and – more often – of their parents.



## 4.5. RELIGION

It has been well established that Christianity became the dominant religion in Egypt during the fourth century. Yet, the only structural elements at Bīr Shawīsh recognized as cultic or related to religious practices are rock-hewn corridor tombs to the east of House 1 featuring open yards with niches and furnaces attesting to cultic activities. The one documented Tomb 1 is dated by the rather poor and coarse ceramic material only roughly to the second and third century.<sup>165</sup> Nothing there seems to suggest the presence of Christians in the area in the pre-Constantine era.

Only much later material evidence from the turn of the fourth century provides some rare attestations of the Christian identity of the dwellers; these are a small painted bowl and two decorated jar lids, which we shall now review.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> See MUSIL et al., *Egyptian Western Desert*, pp. 32a–33b. There, a rather enigmatic mention is made also of “enclosures used as chantry chapels” situated also to the east of the settlement (*ibidem*, p. 32a).

<sup>166</sup> The bowl and jar lids have received preliminary treatment in DOSPĚL, *Written, Inscribed and Decorated*.



Fig. 8: Painted bowl, obj. no. 34/BS/07 (Photo by MF).

The painted bowl Obj. No. 34/BS/07 (see Fig. 8) was found in House 3, Room 12, Context 2. Its height measures 4.2 cm and maximum diameter 12.7 cm. The small shallow bowl is of light orange ware with the inner surface painted in reddish-brown color. The painted decoration features a line encircling the bottom, which is dominated by two lines perpendicular to each other, forming thus a cross. The cross was painted standing on its vertical bar, the lower end of which almost touches the line running in circle around the bottom. The vertical bar is slightly longer than the horizontal one, its part under the crossing longer than the upper one. The upper end of the vertical arm and both ends of the horizontal arm end in a round knob. The entire cross – including the knobs – is dotted around with a smaller brush in a darker color pigment. The same dotting patterns also surround the vertical strokes painted around the inner

walls of the bowl. This patterning is similar to what we can find on the stoppers Obj. Nos. 62b/BS/07 and 117/BS/07.



Fig. 9: Ceramic lid, Obj. No. 117/BS/07 (Photo by MF).

The decorated jar lids include one piece with geometrical motifs featuring three parallel lines running next to each other in the center of the *discus* dividing it in two parts (Obj. No. 117/BS/07; see Fig. 9). Alongside these lines, we see a cross with a round knob at the upper end of the vertical arm flanked by two strokes also ending with a knob. It even looks like a mirrored landscape with three standing objects. All the six “figures” have dotting around them, which also continues along the inside edges of the two lines. Interestingly, the dotting is the same technique we will see on yet another stopper below and on a bowl with painted decoration introduced above. The other stopper with incised decoration exhibits human face on a vertical line of what looks like a cross (62.2/BS/07; see Fig. 10). An additional small cross features in each of the four segments made by the two lines. The figure decidedly looks like a human body reduced to two crossing lines with only the face given in any detail, but a more intriguing possibility is that the incised figure presents a schematic

representation of a human body. It is also noteworthy that on this representation we find similar dotting all around the figure and along the lines, just as we did on the Object No. 117/BS/07 and on the bowl, both of which exhibit a cross, too.



Fig. 10: Ceramic lid, Obj. No. 62.2/BS/07 (right; Photo by MF).

Let us now turn to the textual evidence. Although we cannot expect to find the matters of religion treated in documents like the ostraka presented in this volume, religious (in this case, Christian) identity of the people engaged in economic transactions at Bīr Shawīsh can be observed through their official titles and personal names.

There appear to be six mentions in the ostraka of a *presbyter*; they belong to four different individuals. Although religious land-owners are still absent in the fourth century documentation,<sup>167</sup> it is quite normal to find presbyters and deacons as the representatives of the village population by the

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<sup>167</sup> See BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 150n.8.

end of the same century.<sup>168</sup> We also find presbyters as agents for land-owning magnates (cf. note to **15**). Starting in the early fourth century, the church can be thought of as an alternative source of authority. The Patriarch of Alexandria could, through his bishops, priests, and deacons, his appointees, exercise direct authority both in Alexandria and the whole of Egypt, unlike officials deputised by the distant emperor.

In his ground-breaking study published in 1982, Roger Bagnall presented a model for determining the growth of the Christian element in the population of late antique Egypt based on onomastic data available in selected texts.<sup>169</sup> The method was disputed<sup>170</sup> and later perfected by the author himself.<sup>171</sup> A recently published study by M. Depauw and W. Clarysse aimed at probing the findings by using an adapted method on a much larger dataset, only concluded that “[their] results are similar to the curve which can be distilled from Bagnall’s adapted results in 1987, with 20–30% Christians around 313, a Christian majority around 350.”<sup>172</sup> It is for this reason of using personal names as religious signifiers that I have singled out, in the previous section, the names that are demonstrably Christian.

Other names, as shown in that same section on personal names (4.4.), can attest to classicizing or archaizing tendencies and might be a sign of deliberate choices by the parents to (re-)create or to connect to the local past, regardless of their religion. A similar phenomenon in respect to religious identity can be observed on a find of a pharaonic statuette (Dynasty 26?) in the very same archaeological context as the textual sources attesting to the Christian identity of the dwellers (see Fig. 11). The archaeological circumstances suggest that the statuette had been stored in a niche. The broken artifact raises questions about possible motivations of whoever obtained

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<sup>168</sup> BAGNALL, *ELA*, p. 316.

<sup>169</sup> See BAGNALL, *Religious Conversion*.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. WIPSYCKA, *Valeur*.

<sup>171</sup> In his “Conversion and Onomastics: A Replay,” published in 1987 in *ZPE* 69, pp. 243–250.

<sup>172</sup> DEPAUW & CLARYSSE, *Onomastic Perspectives*, p. 407.

(where?) and had kept this explicitly “pagan” image; questions that might be better addressed elsewhere.



Fig. 11: Pharaonic statuette, Obj. No. 9/BS/07 (Photo by MF).

The issue of religious identity of the occupants of El-Ḥāyz in different periods of history, especially in Late Antiquity when transition to Christianity occurred, is of course implied in these questions. Archaeological studies of religious space can contribute to what we know from textual evidence about the early Christians in the Oasis.<sup>173</sup> Future excavations might also be able to locate more places of worship, in addition to the church at El-Rīs and a chapel in one of the mansions to the west of the “Fortress” at the same site. Any eventual findings would help fill the chronological gap between the rather improvised chapel, which obviously re-used the space of a Roman period

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<sup>173</sup> Cf. LAVAN, Religious space.

mansion, and the grand church built further north probably not earlier than the late seventh century.<sup>174</sup> “Pagan survivals” as apparent both in material culture and uses of personal names constitute another interesting topic.

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<sup>174</sup> GROSSMANN, *Christliche Architektur*, p. 38.



#### 4.6. MILITARY PRESENCE IN EL-HĀYZ

The need for military presence in the region is obvious, as the Small Oasis represented one of the advanced posts of the Empire in the south. The army presence was therefore justified by the insecurity in these liminal outposts. There is enough textual evidence available from outside the Oasis as well as unmistakably military architecture inside the Oasis to witness to the fact.

The time frame of the military presence, the numbers and identity of the military units, as well as their spatial distribution are less evident. Equally important are questions about the role of the military personnel in the local administration and economy, or their involvement in the social fabric. The subject, therefore, certainly deserves more attention in the continuing research.

Although the exact part of the Oasis to which the textual evidence actually refers is of course questionable, the administrative centre in the north is the most likely area by far.<sup>175</sup> Since there exists no direct textual evidence for an army unit stationed in the El-Hāyz Oasis, we need to ask whether there are any traces in our documents and archaeological remains of the army in El-Hāyz. To examine this specific case, we shall first consider the archaeological and architectural evidence in the southern part of the Oasis, and will continue with a discussion of specific clues we find in O. Bir Sh. and the information they can provide on the involvement of the army in the local agrarian society.

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<sup>175</sup> References to army personnel associated with the Small Oasis are not infrequent in the papyrological documentation. On this, see WAGNER, *Oasis*, pp. 390–394.

A specific mention in an early fifth-century administrative document *Notitia dignitatum* (Or. XXVIII, 12) is made of *ala secunda Armeniorum* as being stationed in the Small Oasis, which might refer to the administrative centre of the Oasis in the north. It is likely that military people mentioned in earlier documents were associated with this same unit (WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 392).



#### 4.6.1. Archaeological remains of the Roman army

Two sites have traditionally been associated with the Roman army in terms of archaeological remains. They are the so-called Fortress of El-Rīs and an edifice of Qaṣr Mas‘ūda (see Fig. 2 above). Although they have not been a subject of any archaeological exploration that could conclusively identify them as military in nature, they certainly deserve to be considered here. We shall begin with the so-called Fortress.

Giovanni Belzoni, the first modern Westerner to inspect the El-Ḥāyṣ Oasis, did so on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 1819; in his book, he refers to the “Fortress” only as a “high wall [...], which] evidently enclosed an edifice”.<sup>176</sup> Frédéric Cailliaud followed him on January 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 1820. He explicitly calls the ruins a Roman castle (Fr. *château romain*), adding a general comment that “les enceintes ou châteaux fortifiés que l’on trouve assez souvent dans les oasis, ont dû servir aux anciens habitans pour y enfermer les produits de leurs champs et s’y mettre à l’abri des Arabes du désert”.<sup>177</sup> During what was probably the first visit to the monuments by an Egyptologist in 1825, John Gardner Wilkinson refers to the structure only as “another crude brick ruin, about 74 paces by 50, within the walls, which are about 30 feet high”.<sup>178</sup> In modern scholarly literature, Fakhry speaks of “remains of a Roman fortress” without reservation, which is the prevalent opinion to this day.<sup>179</sup> Fakhry himself later noticed the irregular plan of the remaining walls and suggested that it “must have been built between older structures”, calling it rather a “military camp”.<sup>180</sup>

Indeed, while the surface ceramic material suggests that the “Fortress” was contemporary with the mansions located to its west and dating from the

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<sup>176</sup> BELZONI, *Narratives*, p. 427.

<sup>177</sup> CAILLIAUD, *Voyage*, p. 194.

<sup>178</sup> WILKINSON, *Modern Egypt*, p. 361.

<sup>179</sup> FAKHRY, *Bahria Oasis* 1, p. 36. Cf. MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Archeologický výzkum*, p. 218; and MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Besiedlung*, pp. 63–64, MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Ausgrabung*, pp. 79–80.

<sup>180</sup> FAKHRY, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, p. 113.

third through the fifth centuries,<sup>181</sup> its outer walls do not quite respect the surrounding structures, some of which even appear on aerial pictures to have been swallowed by the “Fortress”. If the edifices immediately adjacent to it are associated with the peak of human presence at the site (fourth to fifth centuries), how much later then must the “Fortress” (or its perimeter walls) be, and what were the circumstances of its construction and its uses – was it constructed in the Tetrarchic period, or earlier? Was it built on the site of an earlier camp, or was it a new military outpost? Are the structures surrounding the “Fortress” rather older than the large mansions to the west? The seeming superposition of the “Fortress” in respect to the adjacent structures suggests that it is either a quite late construction or that those structures date earlier than the mansions to the west.

In seeing the architectural dominant of El-Rīs as a fortress (ideally an element of military control over a region), we fail to explain its isolated location in the landscape. Indeed, if we were to look for a continuing line of forts similar to the more or less east-west oriented line of forts in the north of the Baḥrīya Oasis, leading from Qusour Muharrib (situated by the pass from Oxyrhynchos) in the east to Qaṣr el-Megisba in the west, we see that perhaps only Qaṣr Mas‘ūda is located at a reasonable distance from the site. More specified hypotheses have appeared, speaking most recently of a *refugium* protecting the local population from the incursions of Bedouins.<sup>182</sup>

Monumentalized appearance, however, does not necessarily mean military purpose or use. In fact, the irregular plan and monumental walls of the “Fortress” bring to mind monastic compounds we know from near Sohag (the Red Monastery), Wadi Natroun and other sites. If we can trust the account of Abou Salih, an early thirteenth century Armenian traveller, there were “the monastery of the Leper” in “the oasis of Al-Bahnasâ” and a church dedicated

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<sup>181</sup> MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, Besiedlung.

<sup>182</sup> BARTA et al., Průzkum, p. 162.

to St. George.<sup>183</sup> We know that the church preserved at El-Rīs has traditionally been named after St. George at least since the 1820s when Cailliaud visited it, and could be, therefore, identified with the one mentioned by Abou Salih. However, not one hint alerts us that the monastery might be there too. Expecting a monastery at this site may not be futile, nonetheless, and while some consider locations closer to the church more appropriate,<sup>184</sup> the “Fortress” should not be ruled out – whether it would mean re-using the former (military?) structure or constructing a new compound on top of Roman period houses. But we neither have any clear evidence there ever was a monastery at El-Rīs nor are these considerations about identity of the “Fortress” anything more than guesses until careful building examination and trial excavations take place. What is almost certain, on the other hand, is the subsequent reuse of the “Fortress” for civilian purposes, which was a process we can observe with most of the oases’ forts to have taken place around the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>185</sup>

Similarly questioned can also be the identity of Qaṣr Mas‘ūda located about 1.900 m to the south of the “Fortress”. Modern scholarship assigns military use to it, too. Fakhry speaks of the monument as “ruins of a Roman castle built on a rock”<sup>186</sup> and attributes it “a military use”,<sup>187</sup> calling it later “a military post”.<sup>188</sup> Musil & Tomášek maintain the military character of Qaṣr Mas‘ūda and identify it, in their turn, as a *centenarium* suggesting it was a fortified watering station (*hydreuma*) designed to protect a source of drinking water allegedly represented here by a cistern in the centre of the edifice.<sup>189</sup> It is noteworthy in this respect to quote the earliest 19<sup>th</sup> century traveller, Belzoni,

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<sup>183</sup> EVETTS & BUTLER, 1895, pp. 258–260. Abou Salih makes a mention of two more churches, of St. Bartholomew (in Qarbil) and St. Theodore (*Ibidem*, p. 215).

<sup>184</sup> Large structures at Tahouna are considered by Tomášek (2009, 270 & 273).

<sup>185</sup> For the last point, see BAGNALL, Dakhla and the West, p. 42.

<sup>186</sup> FAKHRY, *Bahria Oasis* 1, p. 36.

<sup>187</sup> FAKHRY, *Bahria Oasis* 2, pp. 54 & 56 fig. 36.

<sup>188</sup> FAKHRY, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, p. 113.

<sup>189</sup> See MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Besiedlung*, p. 64, MUSIL & TOMÁŠEK, *Ausgrabung*, p. 80.

who says that Qaṣr Mas‘ūda “must have been a Copt convent” as “there were several cells separated from each other, and a very deep well of water in the centre, so that the inhabitants of the place were independent of the necessity of coming out to seek that element”.<sup>190</sup> Cailliaud, still, suggested to see in it an ancient bath (“l’on peut regarder comme un ancien bain”).<sup>191</sup> Although we can smile over the historical judgements of the Italian and French travellers as “culturally specific”, one cannot miss the sense of clear reasoning in them, and especially the idea of a monastic abode should not be dismissed without serious consideration.<sup>192</sup>

As should be apparent, the basic set of questions in the course of the continuing exploration might concern the dynamics in human activities at El-Rī and construction history of individual monuments. A more lucid picture will hardly be obtained without excavating selected segments of the site(s) and obtaining contextualized material culture to understand its/their chronological development, to assess the relationship between individual components, and to recognize the character of (developing) human activities at the site(s).

#### 4.6.2. Papyrological evidence for Roman army

References to army personnel associated with the Small Oasis are not infrequent in the papyrological documentation.<sup>193</sup> A specific mention in an early fifth-century administrative document *Notitia dignitatum* (Oriens

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<sup>190</sup> BELZONI, *Narratives*, p. 428.

<sup>191</sup> CAILLIAUD, *Voyage*, p. 194.

<sup>192</sup> Archaeologists and historians of architecture are aware that local names employing words like *qasr* or *deir* do not necessarily refer to fortresses (or palaces) or monasteries, respectively. Of a special note here is the recent re-evaluation of Qaṣr ‘Allam in the northern part of the Baḥrīya Oasis as a 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty “domaine religieux” of Amoun (*pr-Imn*), with a temple, habitations, and service and storage space (see COLIN, Bahariya, pp. 599–601, and sections 9.2.2.1.3.2, 9.3.2, & 9.3.3.2 in COLIN, *Gisements*).

<sup>193</sup> On this, see WAGNER, *Oasis*, pp. 390–394.

XXVIII.12) is made of an otherwise unattested *Ala II Armeniorum* as being stationed in the Small Oasis, which would most likely refer to the administrative centre of the Oasis in the north.<sup>194</sup> It is likely that military people mentioned in earlier documents were associated with this same unit.<sup>195</sup> We shall now turn to the documents excavated recently at Bīr Shawīsh.

Although not military *per se*, there is an *officialis* (ὀφφικιάλιος) mentioned in 44.2 – as ὀφ( ). Did he belong to a military unit or to an office of a *dux*, or was he rather a member of a civil office? Unfortunately, his identity or the kind of transaction in which he seems to be involved could not be recovered. Due to the breakage following ὀφ( ), it is also impossible to say whether he had the title of ἀπατητής “collector”, and I did not find any other sign of fiscal duties that would suggest that he was involved in collecting the *annona militaris*. On the latter subject, it should be noted, that there is no explicit mention of *annona militaris* in our ostraka. In the same time, the only transaction involving *sitokrithon*, seems to be credited to a priest (ῥουφῖνος in 10).

Of the possible military personnel, there is a *praepositus* mentioned in 15.3–4. And it is highly probable, in a document dated to early fifth century, that this *praepositus* is rather a military person than a civilian *praepositus pagi*, which is an interpretation I would also suggest in the case of *O. Bahria* 2, where a *praepositus* is supposed to receive a payment of one chicken.<sup>196</sup> Our document is a receipt acknowledging the disbursement, by a tenant farmer Abraham on behalf of his landlord Isak, of 3 *choes* of oil to a *praepositus*. What is particularly interesting is the identity of the issuer of this receipt – it is not the said *praepositus* (who is not, in fact, introduced by his name), but a priest named Θεῶν. This latter point not only attests to an intermediary role of clergy in certain transactions, but also brings us back to the afore-mentioned

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<sup>194</sup> Reservations concerning reliability of the document, which mistakenly places Trimithis (and with it, the *Ala I Quadorum*) to the Small Oasis, are certainly not unwarranted.

<sup>195</sup> WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 392.

<sup>196</sup> Interpreted as referring to a *praepositus pagi* by the editor; cf. WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 89.

**10**, where the issuer of the receipt for *sitokrithon* is a priest too. Although here the disbursement seems to be credited to the priest (no other person is mentioned, to say the least), the possibility cannot be ruled out that this priest acts on behalf of a military *praepositus*, a leader of a military unit stationed somewhere in the Oasis. Both receipts are for rent payments, after all.

The last possible hint of army in our ostraka to be introduced here concerns the employment of the verb ῥογεύω (Lat. *erogo*) in **20**. The only published pre-sixth century attestations of the verb are within *O. Douch* (II 61.2; 83.1–2; 101.3; 163.6). These are not only the earliest occurrences of the verb, but they also remain the only examples of the phrase ἔσχον καὶ ἐρόγευσα (with the exception of 163.6 where only ἐρόγευσα is secure). The editors of *O. Douch* II asserted that “le sens du verbe n’est pas douteux en l’occurrence” and that ῥογεύειν means “to distribute to soldiers as salary” (*distribuer comme salaire aux soldats*).<sup>197</sup> The key phrase in this assertion is “en l’occurrence”. Indeed, these texts do contain explicit mentions of *annona militaris* or/and of soldiers. It seems unfounded, then, to assume the same exact meaning in any other context.<sup>198</sup> Even though I understand that fiscal liabilities towards army could include garments (such as the στιχάριον in **20**, itself a reference to military dress) and I do acknowledge that the verb ῥογεύειν, a loan-word from Latin (widely used in the army), means “to distribute”, I prefer not to assume that the verb specifically refers to payments of *annona* or implies a military context for that matter. Our document **20** is too fragmentary to allow for such interpretation, to say the least.

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<sup>197</sup> See *O. Douch* II, p. 9, with reference to GASCOU, *Ostrakon grec*, which is a annotated edition of a seventh-century fiscal account *SB* 11844 where the context is explicit in that it mentions *annona* and a cavalier receiving the rations.

<sup>198</sup> Wagner seems to suggest that the word itself implies payments of *annona militaris*; cf. WAGNER, *Oasis*, p. 276.

## LATE ANTIQUE BĪR SHAWĪSH IN PAPYROLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In a paper published in summer 2013,<sup>199</sup> I put forth some thoughts about the historical evidence from the El-Ḥāyz Oasis and have formulated general expectations concerning the future contribution of textual sources that at the time I had only started to edit for my dissertation. Having now completed the editorial work on these documentary texts, I wish to review my earlier thoughts on the material and to draw concluding remarks.

Presentations and studies of papyrological evidence from the Great Oasis demonstrated the important contribution of texts to our understanding about local economies and about the complex socio-economic relations within the oasis and beyond. Although the size of our corpus of 50 short documents is small, this alone does not explain the sense of insularity that pervades the material from Bir Shawish. On the most basic level, this feeling of smallness might in part be a result of the obviously diminutive physical size of the Small Oasis and of even smaller area of El-Ḥāyz in its southern end. More importantly, however, the nature of the evidence itself creates this feeling of insularity. It seems safe to assert that the bulk of our ostraka contains transactions inside the economy of a single *oikos* or estate. At the same time, our documents are limited because they represent only “one side” of those transactions, the side which ended up in House 3. Furthermore, the actual arrangements between the landowners and the tenant farmers are largely missing in our ostraka, for such specifics were usually specified in leases written on papyri rather than on potsherds. Finally, the limitations are also archaeological in nature, as the bulk of the data available comes from a single house and even mostly from its two rooms. This latter factor is clearly apparent

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<sup>199</sup> DOSPĚL & SUKOVÁ, Exploration.

on the only ostrakon that comes from the neighboring House 1: O. Bir Sh. 1 is very different in the form and content.

Notwithstanding the limitations, our texts do in one aspect attest to the connections with the outer world, as 1 is dated according to the Oxyrhynchite era; this we can take to underline the expected close connections of the Oasis to the Oxyrhynchites, but it also shows a local idiosyncrasy in employing a single-digit era date – a practice also extant in the only other instance from the Oasis (*O. Dor.* 2).

Although the administrative dependance of the Oasis on the Oxyrhynchites is a largely accepted fact, any details of that relationship remain unknown and unfortunately our texts do not elucidate matters any further. Our documents do not even contribute more toponyms to the oasite geography and onomastics.

Turning to the positive evidence, our texts seem to confirm the classicizing oasite tendency in giving archaic names in Late Antiquity. And even though it would be premature to assess the local agrarian economy in definite terms, the extant texts do allow a few observations. Our documents clearly demonstrate the general character of the agrarian production as being oriented on horticulture and arboriculture, rather than the traditional agriculture we know from the Valley, although the texts seem to suggest that El-Ḥāyṣ may have actually differed from northern Baḥrīya in being more self-sufficient in arable crops – perhaps more like the Dakhla Oasis. Relatively frequent in our documents are especially cotton and olive oil; these are typically oasite crops for two reasons: they do not like to be flooded and are high-value non-perishable products that could be shipped economically.

Importantly, cotton and olives depend on water resources for irrigation. Cotton is an especially highly water-demanding plant, one which demanded extensive natural resources. This point is important when thinking about the assumed aridization and ultimate abandonment of El-Ḥāyṣ in Late Antiquity. A possible parallel might be found in the fate of the Aral Sea, whose waters had since 1950s been used by the Soviets to irrigate semi-arid regions of



Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to grow cotton for international market, eventually leading to its shrinkage to under 10% of its original size and destroying local ecosystems. While one should be careful comparing the causes of the environmental catastrophe in central Asia with the fate of El-Ḥāyṣ, the motivations of the agribusiness were likely the same: what might have brought huge profits to the propertied investors was capable of eventually bringing ruin upon a whole (eco)system. At the least, we can expect that the depletion of water and soil to grow these products had serious environmental consequences on the oasis. Future collaboration with archaeobotanists might bring valuable results.

According to our expectations, our textual and material sources attest to the wide-spread presence of Christianity at the site – through onomastics and iconographies across media, presenting us with Christian names, titles, and crosses. The inscribed material is especially interesting in its accounts of personal names inscribed on different kinds of earthenware of daily use (on lamps, lids, and a jar). Similar representations of the cross represent another noticeable element that reappears across different media; they are evident in the repeated employment of dotting and knobs (on two decorated jar lids and on the bowl).

To conclude, our understanding about agrarian practices of late antique Egypt depends heavily on the evidence from metropoleis; this distortion owes to the archaeological practice and to the sheer survival of papyrological documentation attesting to the world of urban magnates. Thus any evidence derived from the countryside is especially precious, and all the more so when it attests to the late fourth and the fifth century, when the documentation from villages is very poor. I hope that the future exploration of the El-Ḥāyṣ Oasis will yield more historical sources and that excavators, papyrologists and other specialists will effectively collaborate to provide a more complex, reliable and convincing account of the late antique life in that liminal part of the inhabited world.



## APPENDICES

### I. Concordance of Object Numbers and Publication Numbers (Ostraka)

| Object Nos.  | OSTRAKA | O. Bir Sh. |
|--|---------|------------|
| 016.1/BS/07 (+ 16.15/BS/07)                            |         | 31         |
| 016.10/BS/07 (+ 16.11/BS/07; 16.17/BS/07; 16.18/BS/07) |         | 7          |
| 016.11/BS/07 (+ 16.10/BS/07; 16.17/BS/07; 16.18/BS/07) |         | 7          |
| 016.12/BS/07   |         | 39         |
| 016.13/BS/07   |         | 40         |
| 016.14/BS/07   |         | 2          |
| 016.15/BS/07 (+ 16.1/BS/07)                            |         | 31         |
| 016.16/BS/07 (+ 16.8/BS/07)                            |         | 36         |
| 016.17/BS/07 (+ 16.10/BS/07; 16.11/BS/07; 16.18/BS/07) |         | 7          |
| 016.18/BS/07 (+ 16.10/BS/07; 16.11/BS/07; 16.17/BS/07) |         | 7          |
| 016.19/BS/07   |         | 41         |
| 016.2/BS/07  |         | 38         |
| 016.20/BS/07   |         | 24         |
| 016.21/BS/07   |         | 15         |
| 016.22/BS/07   |         | 16         |
| 016.3/BS/07  |         | 23         |
| 016.4/BS/07  |         | 10         |
| 016.5/BS/07  |         | 6          |
| 016.6/BS/07  |         | 14         |
| 016.7/BS/07  |         | 18         |
| 016.8/BS/07 (+ 16.16/BS/07)                            |         | 36         |
| 016.9/BS/07  |         | 4          |
| 018/BS/05  |         | 12         |
| 019/BS/05  |         | 17         |
| 023/BS/07  |         | 42         |
| 030/BS/05  |         | 1          |
| 032/BS/07  |         | 25         |

| <b>Object Nos.</b>                                   | <b>OSTRAKA</b> | <b>O. Bir Sh.</b> |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| 033/BS/07  |                | 43                |
| 043/BS/07  |                | 22                |
| 044/BS/07  |                | 29                |
| 045/BS/07 (+ 244/BS/07)                              |                | 19                |
| 056/BS/07  |                | 26                |
| 064/BS/07  |                | 13                |
| 081/BS/07  |                | 27                |
| 083.1/BS/07  |                | 44                |
| 083.10/BS/07 (+ 83.8/BS/07; 83.9/BS/07; 83.11/BS/07) |                | 35                |
| 083.11/BS/07 (+ 83.8/BS/07; 83.9/BS/07; 83.10/BS/07) |                | 35                |
| 083.2/BS/07 (+ 83.7/BS/07)                           |                | 45                |
| 083.3/BS/07 (+ 83.5/BS/07)                           |                | 3                 |
| 083.4/BS/07  |                | 46                |
| 083.5/BS/07 (+ 83.3/BS/07)                           |                | 3                 |
| 083.6/BS/07  |                | 11                |
| 083.7/BS/07 (+ 83.2/BS/07)                           |                | 45                |
| 083.8/BS/07 (+ 83.9/BS/07; 83.10/BS/07; 83.11/BS/07) |                | 35                |
| 083.9/BS/07 (+ 83.8/BS/07; 83.10/BS/07; 83.11/BS/07) |                | 35                |
| 094/BS/07  |                | 20                |
| 095/BS/07  |                | 30                |
| 102.1/BS/07  |                | 21                |
| 102.2/BS/07  |                | 33                |
| 216/BS/07  |                | 8                 |
| 244/BS/07 (+ 45/BS/07)                               |                | 19                |
| 252/BS/07  |                | 47                |
| 272/BS/07  |                | 5                 |
| 278/BS/07 (+ 291/BS/07)                              |                | 48                |
| 291/BS/07 (+ 278/BS/07)                              |                | 48                |
| 292/BS/07  |                | 32                |
| 293/BS/07  |                | 34                |
| 294/BS/07  |                | 49                |
| 295/BS/07  |                | 9                 |
| 296/BS/07  |                | 28                |
| 297/BS/07  |                | 50                |
| SineNum/BS/05  |                | 37                |

## II. Concordance of Publication Numbers and Object Numbers (Ostraka)

| Object Nos.  | OSTRAKA | O. Bir Sh. |
|--|---------|------------|
| 030/BS/05  |         | 1          |
| 016.14/BS/07   |         | 2          |
| 083.3/BS/07 (+ 83.5/BS/07)                             |         | 3          |
| 016.9/BS/07  |         | 4          |
| 272/BS/07  |         | 5          |
| 016.5/BS/07  |         | 6          |
| 016.10/BS/07 (+ 16.11/BS/07; 16.17/BS/07; 16.18/BS/07) |         | 7          |
| 216/BS/07  |         | 8          |
| 295/BS/07  |         | 9          |
| 016.4/BS/07  |         | 10         |
| 083.6/BS/07  |         | 11         |
| 018/BS/05  |         | 12         |
| 064/BS/07  |         | 13         |
| 016.6/BS/07  |         | 14         |
| 016.21/BS/07   |         | 15         |
| 016.22/BS/07   |         | 16         |
| 019/BS/05  |         | 17         |
| 016.7/BS/07  |         | 18         |
| 045/BS/07 (+ 244/BS/07)                                |         | 19         |
| 094/BS/07  |         | 20         |
| 102.1/BS/07  |         | 21         |
| 043/BS/07  |         | 22         |
| 016.3/BS/07  |         | 23         |
| 016.20/BS/07   |         | 24         |
| 032/BS/07  |         | 25         |
| 056/BS/07  |         | 26         |
| 081/BS/07  |         | 27         |
| 296/BS/07  |         | 28         |
| 044/BS/07  |         | 29         |
| 095/BS/07  |         | 30         |
| 016.1/BS/07 (+ 16.15/BS/07)                            |         | 31         |
| 292/BS/07  |         | 32         |

| <b>Object Nos.</b>                                   | <b>OSTRAKA</b> | <b>O. Bir Sh.</b> |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| 102.2/BS/07  |                | 33                |
| 293/BS/07  |                | 34                |
| 083.10/BS/07 (+ 83.8/BS/07; 83.9/BS/07; 83.11/BS/07) |                | 35                |
| 016.8/BS/07 (+ 16.16/BS/07)                          |                | 36                |
| SineNum/BS/05  |                | 37                |
| 016.2/BS/07  |                | 38                |
| 016.12/BS/07   |                | 39                |
| 016.13/BS/07   |                | 40                |
| 016.19/BS/07   |                | 41                |
| 023/BS/07  |                | 42                |
| 033/BS/07  |                | 43                |
| 083.1/BS/07  |                | 44                |
| 083.2/BS/07 (+ 83.7/BS/07)                           |                | 45                |
| 083.4/BS/07  |                | 46                |
| 252/BS/07  |                | 47                |
| 278/BS/07 (+ 291/BS/07)                              |                | 48                |
| 294/BS/07  |                | 49                |
| 297/BS/07  |                | 50                |

### III. Concordance of Object Numbers and Publication Numbers (Inscriptions)

| Object Nos.   | INSCRIPTIONS | I. Bir Sh. |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| 013/BS/05     |              | 5          |
| 037/BS/07     |              | 2          |
| 054/BS/07     |              | 3          |
| 068/BS/07     |              | 9          |
| 164/BS/07     |              | 8          |
| 225/BS/07     |              | 4          |
| 226/BS/07     |              | 1          |
| 243/BS/07     |              | 10         |
| SineNum/BS/07 |              | 7          |
| SineNum/BS/12 |              | 6          |

### IV. Concordance of Publication Numbers and Object Numbers (Inscriptions)

| Object Nos.   | INSCRIPTIONS | I. Bir Sh. |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| 226/BS/07     |              | 1          |
| 037/BS/07     |              | 2          |
| 054/BS/07     |              | 3          |
| 225/BS/07     |              | 4          |
| 013/BS/05     |              | 5          |
| SineNum/BS/12 |              | 6          |
| SineNum/BS/07 |              | 7          |
| 164/BS/07     |              | 8          |
| 068/BS/07     |              | 9          |
| 243/BS/07     |              | 10         |

## V. Table of Presented Material According to its Archaeological Context<sup>200</sup>

| House | Room | DSU | Comments                                | Object No.   | Publ. No. |
|-------|------|-----|---|--------------|-----------|
| 3     | 02   | 1   | 40 deep                                 | 094/BS/07    | 20        |
| 3     | 07   | 1   | by conjecture                           | 293/BS/07    | 34        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.5/BS/07  | 3         |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.1/BS/07  | 44        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.10/BS/07 | 35        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.11/BS/07 | 35        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.2/BS/07  | 45        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.3/BS/07  | 3         |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.4/BS/07  | 46        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.6/BS/07  | 11        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.7/BS/07  | 45        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.8/BS/07  | 35        |
| 3     | 08   | 1   |   | 083.9/BS/07  | 35        |
| 3     | 11   | 3   | 110 deep; 210 off E wall, 95 off S wall | 056/BS/07    | 26        |
| 3     | 11   | 3   | Niche 2, S wall                         | 064/BS/07    | 13        |
| 3     | 11   | 3   | 110 deep; by conjecture                 | 295/BS/07    | 9         |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.14/BS/07 | 2         |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.1/BS/07  | 31        |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.10/BS/07 | 7         |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.11/BS/07 | 7         |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.12/BS/07 | 39        |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.13/BS/07 | 40        |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.15/BS/07 | 31        |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.16/BS/07 | 36        |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.17/BS/07 | 7         |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.18/BS/07 | 7         |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                           | 016.19/BS/07 | 41        |

<sup>200</sup> Unlike the tables within the Chapter 3 where the data were arranged according to publication numbers of ostraka and inscriptions respectively, the primary purpose of this table is to organize the texts according to their archaeological context. The present table combines the two separate tables presented in Chapter 3 and adds to it any other material from Bīr Shawīsh published or discussed in this volume. Unless stated otherwise, the publication numbers are those of O. Bir Sh.



| House | Room | DSU | Comments                                     | Object No.    | Publ. No.    |
|-------|------|-----|--|---------------|--------------|
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.2/BS/07   | 38           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.20/BS/07  | 24           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.21/BS/07  | 15           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.22/BS/07  | 16           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.3/BS/07   | 23           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.4/BS/07   | 10           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.5/BS/07   | 6            |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.6/BS/07   | 14           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.7/BS/07   | 18           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.8/BS/07   | 36           |
| 3     | 12   | 1   | 60–80 cm deep                                | 016.9/BS/07   | 4            |
| 3     | 12   | 2   | 80 deep                                      | 023/BS/07     | 42           |
| 3     | 12   | 2   | 120 deep; by S wall, 155 off W wall          | 032/BS/07     | 25           |
| 3     | 12   | 2   | 120 deep; by S wall, 155 off W wall          | 033/BS/07     | 43           |
| 3     | 12   | 2   | 120 deep; by E wall                          | 037/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 2 |
| 3     | 12   | 2   | 140 deep, by a nich in S wall                | 043/BS/07     | 22           |
| 3     | 12   | 2   | 140 cm deep, by S niche                      | 045/BS/07     | 19           |
| 3     | 12   | –   | by S niche                                   | 044/BS/07     | 29           |
| 3     | 19   | –   |  | 013/BS/05     | I. Bir Sh. 5 |
| 3     | 19   | –   | 0 to 50 above the floor (?)                  | 018/BS/05     | 12           |
| 3     | 19   | –   | fill behind a pillar (floor deposit?)        | 019/BS/05     | 17           |
| 3     | 19   | –   | by conjecture                                | SineNum/BS/05 | 37           |
| 3     | 25   | 1   | by conjecture                                | 297/BS/07     | 50           |
| 3     | –    | –   | fill of Room 12?                             | 252/BS/07     | 47           |
| 3     | –    | –   | spoil heap find                              | SineNum/BS/12 | I. Bir Sh. 6 |
| 3     | 11E  | 2   | by conjecture                                | 296/BS/07     | 28           |
| 3     | 11E  | 3   | 110 deep; 65 off S wall, 185 off E wall      | 054/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 3 |
| 3     | 11E  | 3   | 140 deep (by conjecture)                     | 081/BS/07     | 27           |
| 3     | 11E  | 4   | 160 deep                                     | 095/BS/07     | 30           |
| 3     | 11E  | 4   | 180 deep; 20 off E wall, 30 off S wall       | 102.1/BS/07   | 21           |
| 3     | 11E  | 4   | 180 deep; 20 off E wall, 30 off S wall       | 102.2/BS/07   | 33           |
| 3     | 11E  | 5   | 180 (fieldbook), or 260 (list of finds) deep | 164/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 8 |
| 3     | 11E  | 5   | 140 deep; 70 off E wall, 130 off N wall      | 216/BS/07     | 8            |
| 3     | 11E  | 6   | 250 deep; 80 off E wall, 140 off N wall      | 225/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 4 |
| 3     | 11E  | 6   | 250 deep                                     | 226/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 1 |
| 3     | 11E  | 6   | by conjecture                                | 292/BS/07     | 32           |
| 3     | 11E  | 6   | by conjecture                                | 294/BS/07     | 49           |
| 3     | 11W  | 3   | 155 deep; 340 off W wall, 255 off S wall     | 068/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 9 |

| House | Room | DSU   | Comments                                   | Object No.    | Publ. No.     |
|-------|------|-------|--|---------------|---------------|
| 3     | 11W  | 4     |  | SineNum/BS/07 | I. Bir Sh. 7  |
| 3     | 11W  | 5     | 200 deep; 390 off W wall, 40 off S wall    | 243/BS/07     | I. Bir Sh. 10 |
| 3     | 11W  | 5     | 200 deep; 440 off W wall, 110 off S wall   | 244/BS/07     | 19            |
| 3     | 11W  | 6     | 270 cm deep; 40 off S wall, 485 off W wall | 272/BS/07     | 5             |
| 3     | 11W  | 6     | 290 deep; 240 off S wall, 360 off W wall   | 278/BS/07     | 48            |
| 3     | 11W? | 6 (?) | by conjecture (spoil heap find)            | 291/BS/07     | 48            |
| 4     | 01   | –     | Niche 3, N wall                            | 030/BS/05     | 1             |

## INDICES<sup>201</sup>

### I. Chronology

#### A. Regnal Years

79                      1.1, 4

#### B. Indiction Years

|    |                             |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 1  | 1.4; 5.4                    |
| 2  | (7conv.5)                   |
| 3  | 28.3                        |
| 4  | 13.4; 50.4                  |
| 5  | 25.5; 34.7                  |
| 6  | 6.4; 35.4–5                 |
| 7  | 17.5                        |
| 8  | 16.2; 23.4                  |
| 9  | 11.2; 12.3; 14.4            |
| 10 | 15.3                        |
| 11 | 8.3, 5; 15.6; (16.3); 30.1  |
| 12 | 22.4; (27.6); (29.5)        |
| 13 | 21.6; (24.5)                |
| 14 | 18.4; 42.5                  |
| 15 | 4.1 (?); 22.6; 26.3; (47.4) |
| ?  | 19.4–5; 29.4; 40.1          |

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<sup>201</sup> Unless stated otherwise (I., for Inscriptions), references are to O. Bir Sh.; uncertain or substantially restored attestations are presented in round brackets.

## C. Months and Days<sup>202</sup>

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Θώθ                   | 2.1 (1)   |
| Φαῶφι                 | 15.5–6 (25); (27.6) (20)                                    |
| Ἄθύρ                  | (31.3)  |
| Μεχείρ                | (29.5)  |
| Παχών                 | 22.5 (24); (42.5) (4)                                       |
| Παῶνι                 | 7conv.7 (?); 28.3 (24); 45.5 (20)                           |
| Ἐπείφ                 | (8.5) (12); 20.5 (28?); 24.5 (20); (50.4) (?);<br>37conv.2; |
| Μεσορή                | 1.1 (11); 16.3 (30); 34.8 (16)                              |
| Ἐπαγομένων, ἡμέρα τῶν | 25.6–7 (3)  |

## II. Personal Names

(b. = brother of; f. = father of; s. = son of)

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Ἀβραάμ                         | 18.1; 23.1  |
| (most likely same as s. Jakob) |   |
| - s. Ἰακώβ                     | 10.2; 14.1; 15.1; 16.1; (19.1); 21.1; 22.2; 25.2; 27.1;<br>29.2; (36.1); 40.2 |
| Ἀλέξανδρος f. Θέων             | 25.1  |
| Ἀμ..[ f. Ἀμώνιος               | 34.3  |
| Ἀμώνιος s. Ἀμ..[               | 34.3  |
| Ἀπόλλων                        | 13.1; (9.1)   |
| - s. Θώνιος                    | 5.2   |
| Ἀπολλῶς                        | I. 3.1; I. 4.1; (I. 9)  |
| Εἰρήνη                         | 1.2   |
| Ἐκτωρ                          | 26.3  |

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<sup>202</sup> Days are indicated in the round brackets following the publication number.

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Ἑρφβῆκικς         | (18.5)   |
| Ἡλίας             | (26.1)   |
| - f. Ἰσάκ         | 35.2   |
| Ἡρακλείδης        | 8.1; 13.1  |
| Θεόπεμπος         | 11.1; 35.1   |
| Θέων              | 15.1; (32.1)   |
| - s. Ἀλέξανδρος   | 25.1   |
| Θώνιος f. Ἀπόλλων | 5.2  |
| Ἰακώβ             | (26.1); 30.4; 43.1   |
| - f. Ἀβραάμ       | 10.2; 14.1; 15.1; 16.1; 19.2; 21.1; 22.2; 25.3; 27.1;<br>29.2; (36.2); 40.2  |
| Ἰλαρος            | 19.1; 31.5   |
| Ἰσάκ              | 7conc.1; 7conv.4; (9.1); 11.1; 15.4; (18.4); (21.1);<br>(27.1); 29.1; (48.1) |
| - s. Ἡλίας        | 35.1   |
| Ἰσίδωρος          | 7conv.1; 17.1; 34.1  |
| Ἰωσήφ             | 23.1   |
| - s. Σαρ( )       | 25.2   |
| Λαλάχιος          | 12.1   |
| Ὅρ                | 1.9  |
| Παπνοῦθις         | 18.1; 50.1; I. 2.2   |
| Πα...             | 14.1   |
| Πέτρος            | I. 2.1, 3  |
| Ῥουφῖνος          | 10.1   |
| Σαραπάμων         | I. 1.2   |
| Σαρ( ) f. Ἰωσήφ   | 25.2   |
| Τιμόθεος          | 20.1; 22.1; 36.3   |
| Τοιθον            | I. 1   |
| Τρωίλος           | 17.1; 34.1   |
| Χάρης             | (9.4)  |
| Ψενεπνοῦτις       | 8.1  |

ὤριων 50.1

### III. Official and Military Terms

λειτουργέω 5.3  
λειτουργός 5.3; 24.2  
ὀφφικιάλιος 44.2  
πάγαρχος 5.1; (27.1); 29.1  
πραιπόσιτος 15.3–4

### IV. Professions, Occupations, and Statuses

ἀγροφύλαξ 20.1; 22.1; (36.4)  
γεουχικός 18.2; 34.5; 48.5  
γεοῦχος 7conv.4; 15.4; 20.3; (47.3)  
γεωργός 15.2; 16.1; (18.1); (19.2); 21.2; 22.2; 25.3; 27.2;  
(29.2); 32.2; 36.2; 50.1  
δέσποινα 19.3; 22.2–3  
κεραμεύς 1.9

### V. Religion

πρεσβύτερος 10.1; 15.1; 18.1; 26.1; (32.1); 50.1  
χμβ I. 10

## **VI. Payments and Taxation**

|       |                                  |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| μέρος | 18.2; 34.6                       |
| φόρος | 6.4; 7conv.5; (10.3); 13.2; 15.3 |

## **VII. Money, Weights, and Measures**

|           |                                   |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| ἀρτάβη    | 4.4; 6.5; 8.3, 4; 9.5; 11.3; 12.3 |
| δέμα      | 45.4                              |
| ἡμικάδιον | 1.4, 6, 7, 8; 37conc.2            |
| λίτρα     | 17.4; 18.5; (48.7)                |
| μανδάκιον | 4.3; 13.3; 34.4                   |
| μάτιον    | (4.2); 6.5; 10.4; 11.4            |
| μόδιον    | 7conv.5; 11.3                     |
| χοῖνιξ    | 9.5                               |
| χοῦς      | 12.2; 14.5; 15.5; 16.2            |

## **VIII. General Index of Greek and Coptic Words**

(definite article and καί are not indexed)

### **A. Greek**

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| ἀγροφύλαξ | see Index IV  |
| ἀδελφός   | 35.2–3        |
| ἄλλοτε    | 37conv.1      |
| ἀπό       | 1.3; 2.1; 4.1 |
| ἀποστέλλω | 43.3          |

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| ἀρτάβη    | see Index VII  |
| αὐτός     | <b>8.4; (14.5); 15.6; (16.4); 18.6</b>                   |
| ἄχυρον    | <b>4.3; 13.2; (34.4)</b>                                 |
| γένημα    | <b>18.3</b>  |
| γεουχικός | see Index IV   |
| γεοῦχος   | see Index IV   |
| γεώργιον  | <b>8.2; 44.3</b>   |
| γεωργός   | see Index IV   |
| γράμμα    | <b>18.6</b>  |
| γράφω     | <b>(1.9); 18.6; 37conv.1</b>                             |
| δέκα      | <b>(24.4); (25.6); 26.4; 27.5; 35.6</b>                  |
| δεκαπέντε | <b>45.4</b>  |
| δέκατος   | <b>15.3</b>  |
| δελφάκιον | <b>22.4</b>  |
| δέμα      | see Index VII  |
| δέσποινα  | see Index IV   |
| δέχομαι   | <b>6.3, 8; 8.2; 11.2; 17.3; 24.2; 29.3</b>               |
| διά       | <b>(25.1); 50.1</b>                                      |
| διετίος   | <b>24.3</b>  |
| δύο       | <b>13.3; 34.4</b>  |
| ἐγώ       | <b>(18.5); 22.3</b>                                      |
| εἶδομαι   | <b>18.7;</b>   |
| εἰμί      | <b>24.4</b>  |
| εἰς       | <b>1.5; 7conv.3; 18.2; 24.2; (26.2); (30.2); (34.5);</b> |
| ἐκ, ἐξ    | <b>15.4; 20.2;</b>                                       |
| ἔκτος     | <b>6.4; 35.4</b>   |
| ἔλαιον    | <b>3.2; 12.2; 14.4; 15.5; 16.2</b>                       |
| ἐν        | <b>1.2, 5, 7 (?);</b>                                    |
| ἐν        | <b>26.4; 27.4; 35.5; 42.4; 45.3</b>                      |
| ἐννέα     | <b>36.4</b>  |
| ἐξάμηνος  | <b>5.4;</b>  |



|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ἐπί            | 5.4;  |
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## **B. Coptic**

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### Abbreviations

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <i>AfP</i>     | <i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung</i>                                |
| <i>ASAE</i>    | <i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i>              |
| AUC            | American University in Cairo Press                                |
| <i>BASP</i>    | <i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>          |
| <i>BIFAO</i>   | <i>Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale</i>    |
| <i>CdÉ</i>     | <i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>   |
| CUP            | Cambridge University Press  |
| IFAO           | Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale                         |
| <i>JJurPap</i> | <i>Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i>                             |
| <i>MDAIK</i>   | <i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo</i> |
| OUP            | Oxford University Press   |
| <i>ZPE</i>     | <i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>                 |

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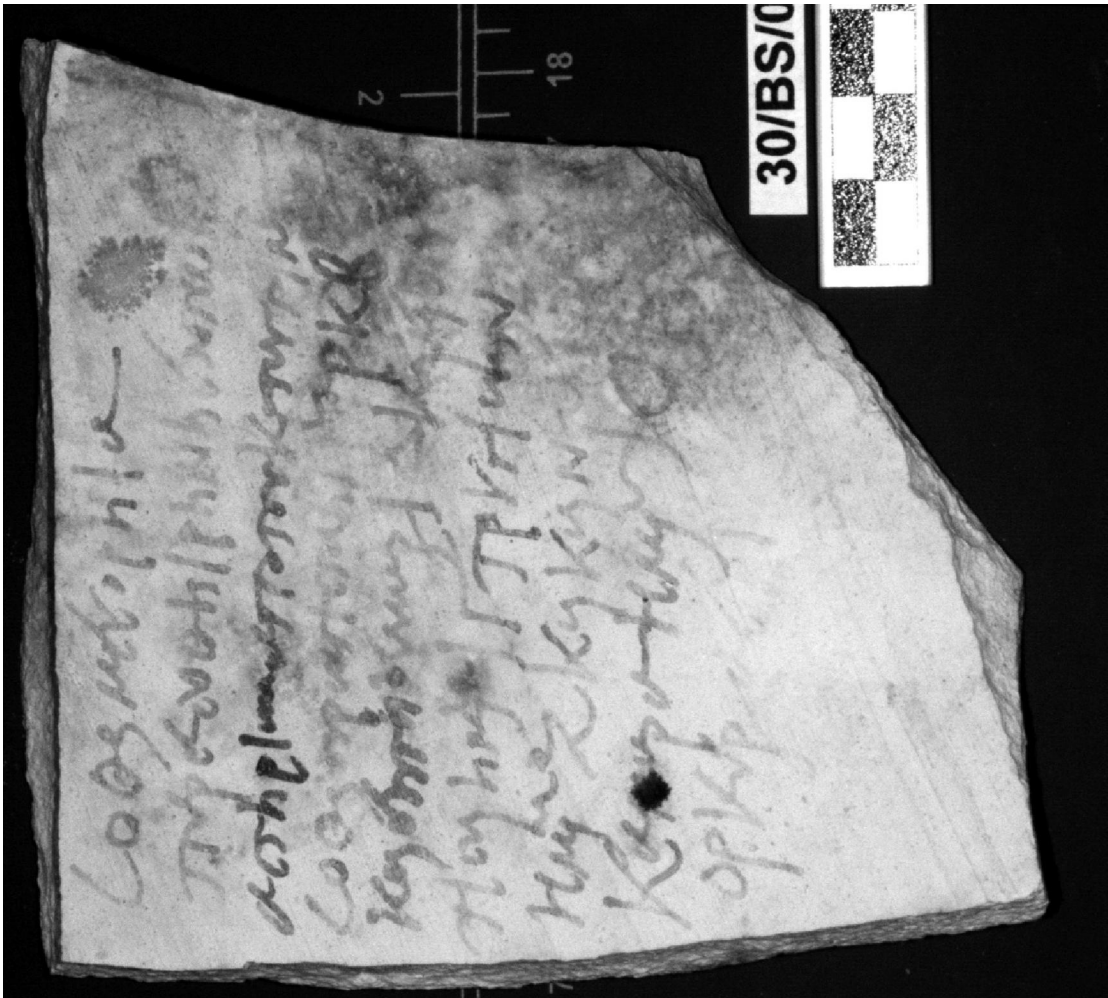
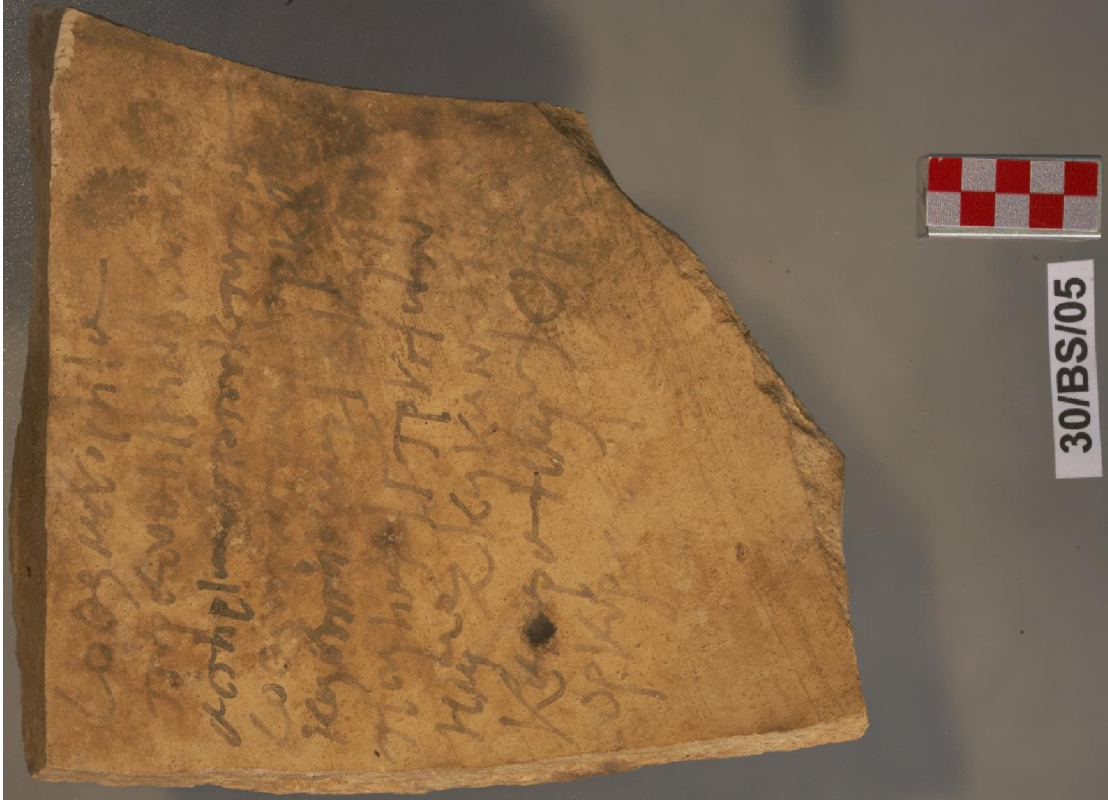
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## **PLATES**

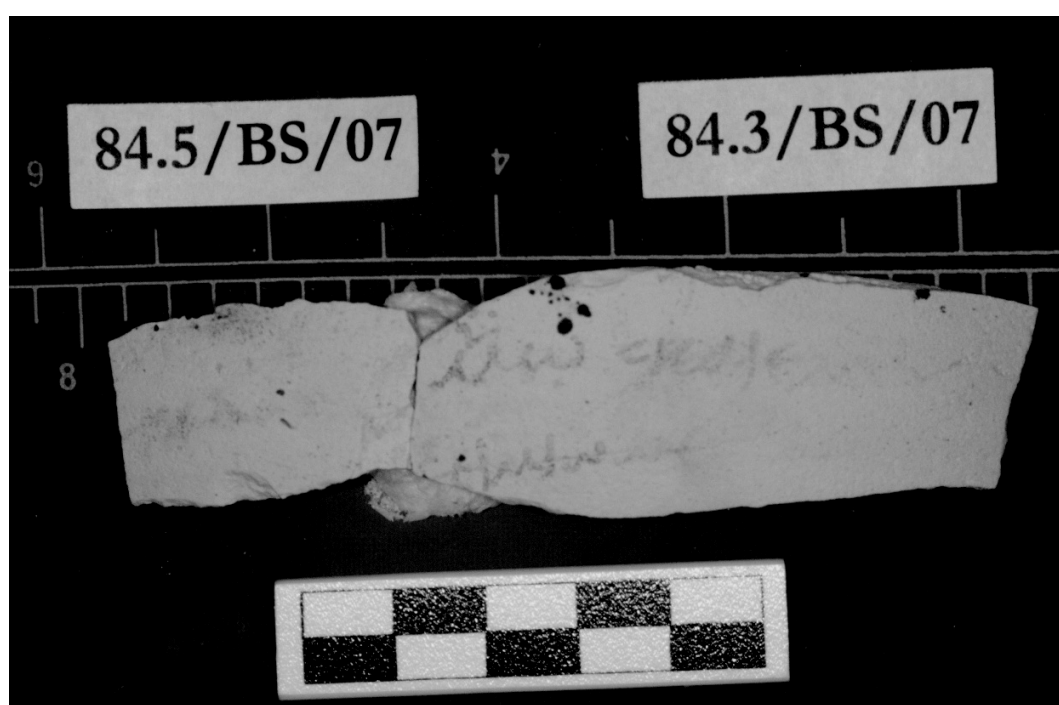
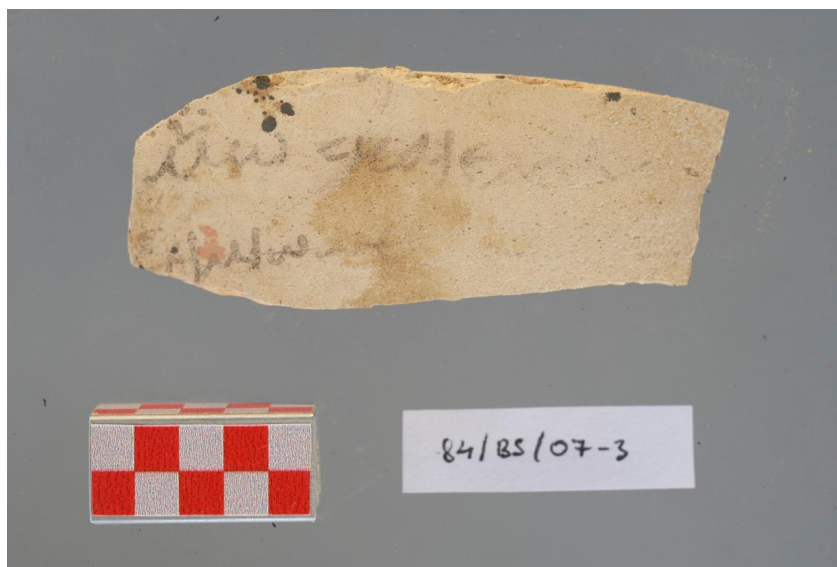
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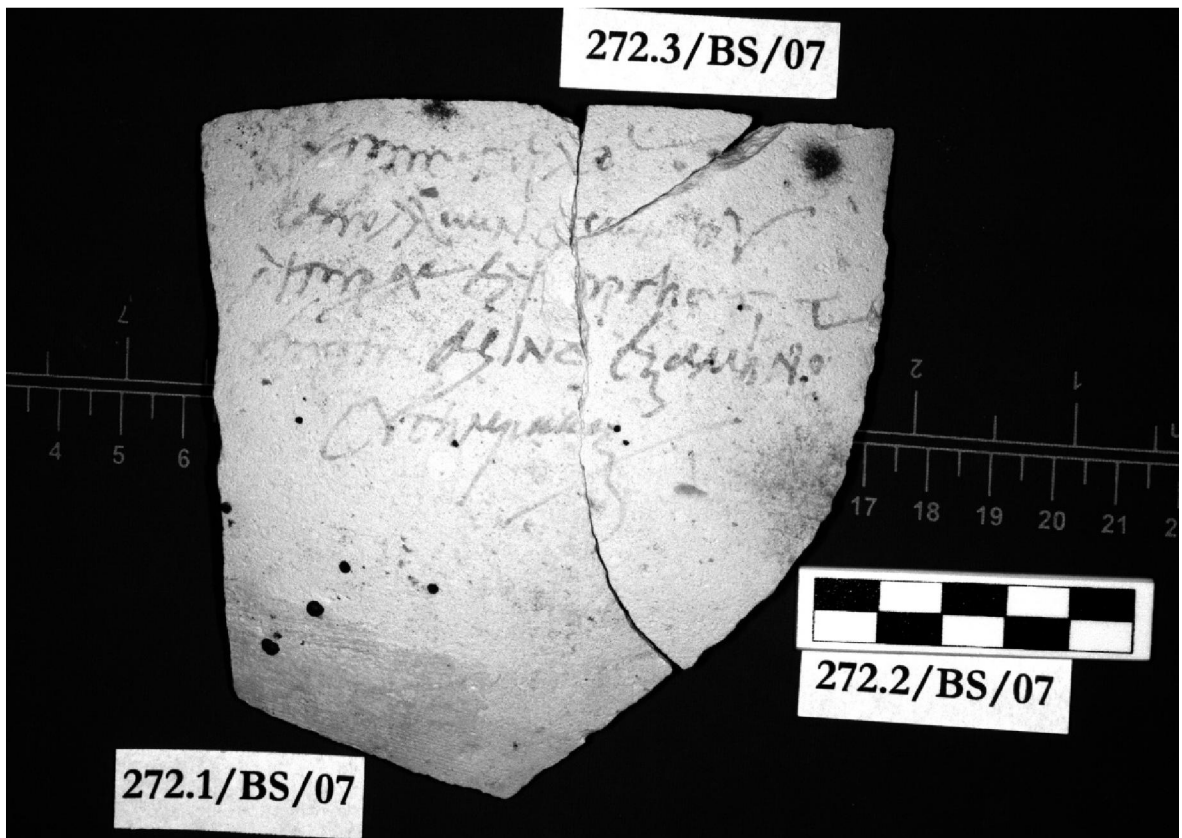
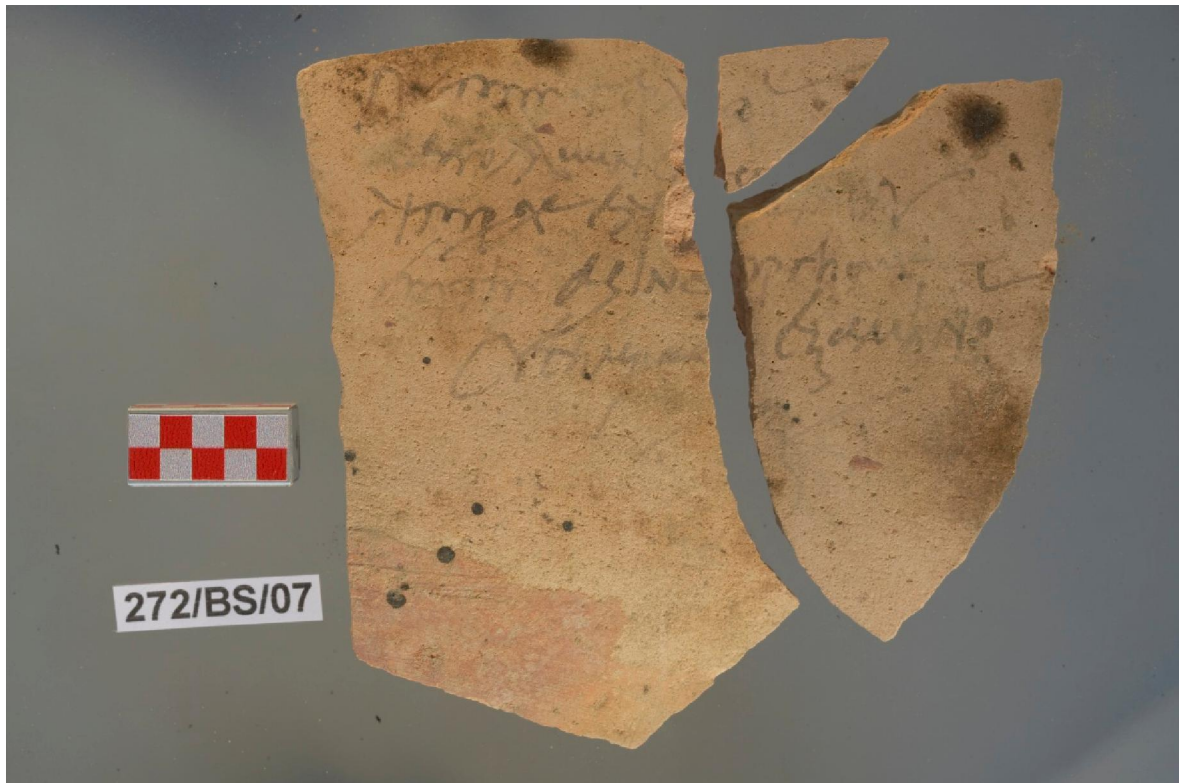


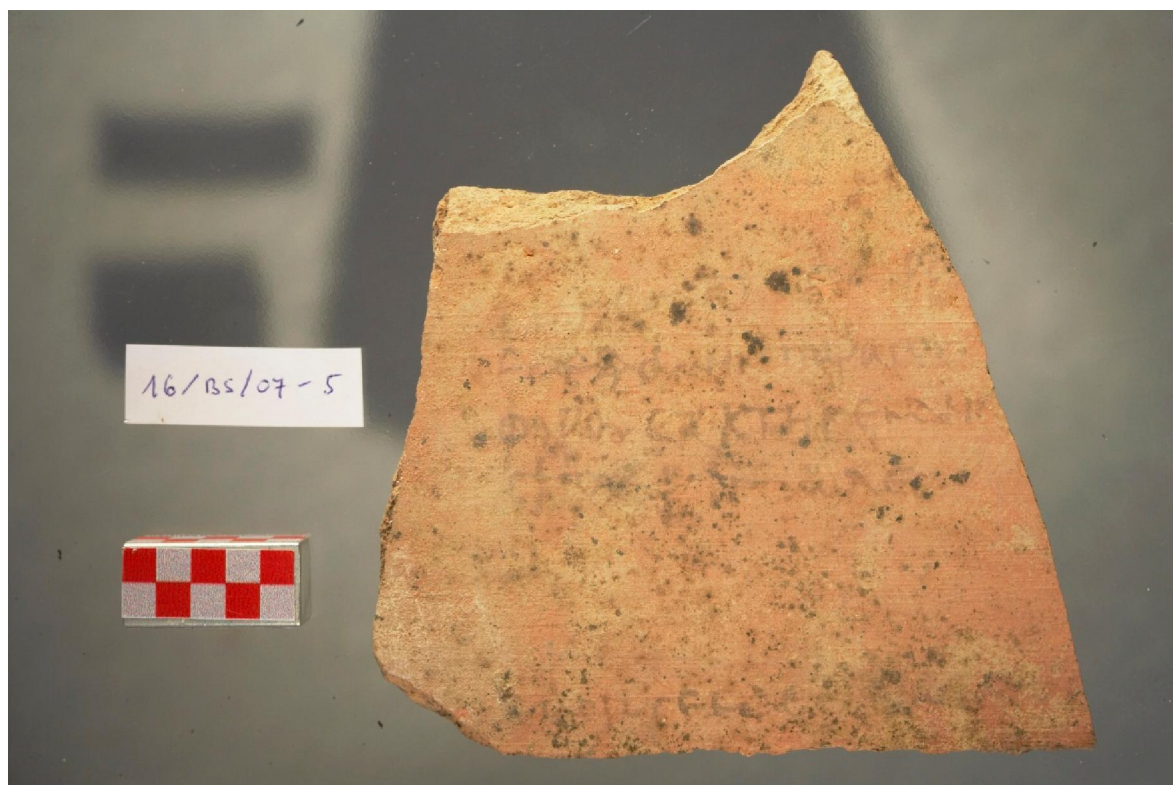




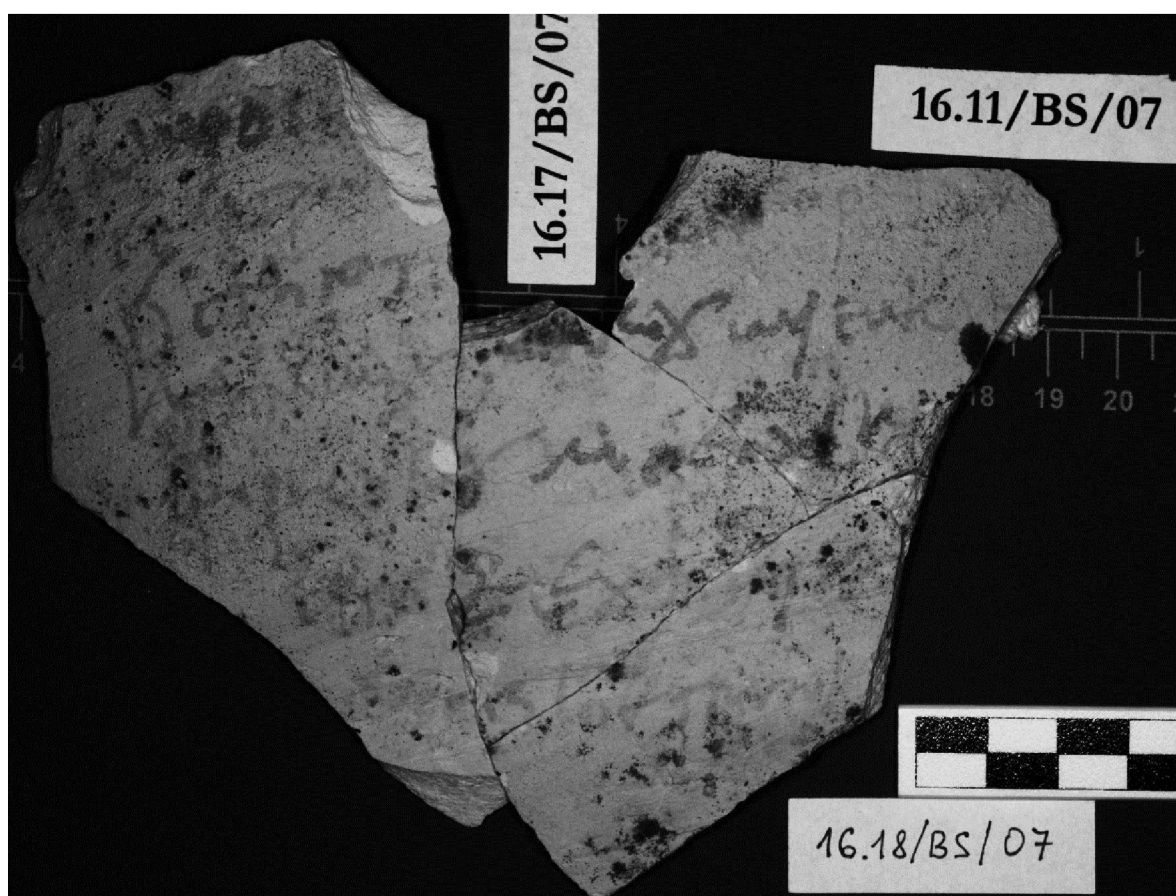




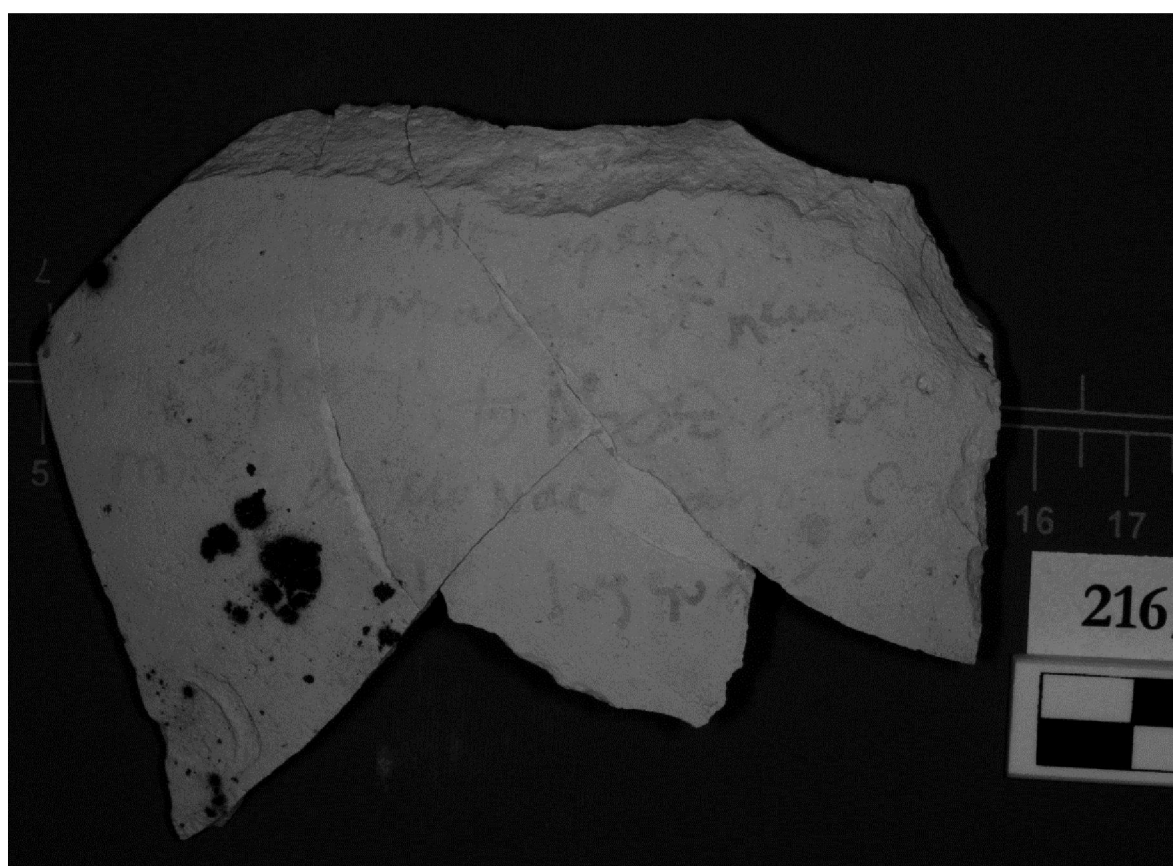
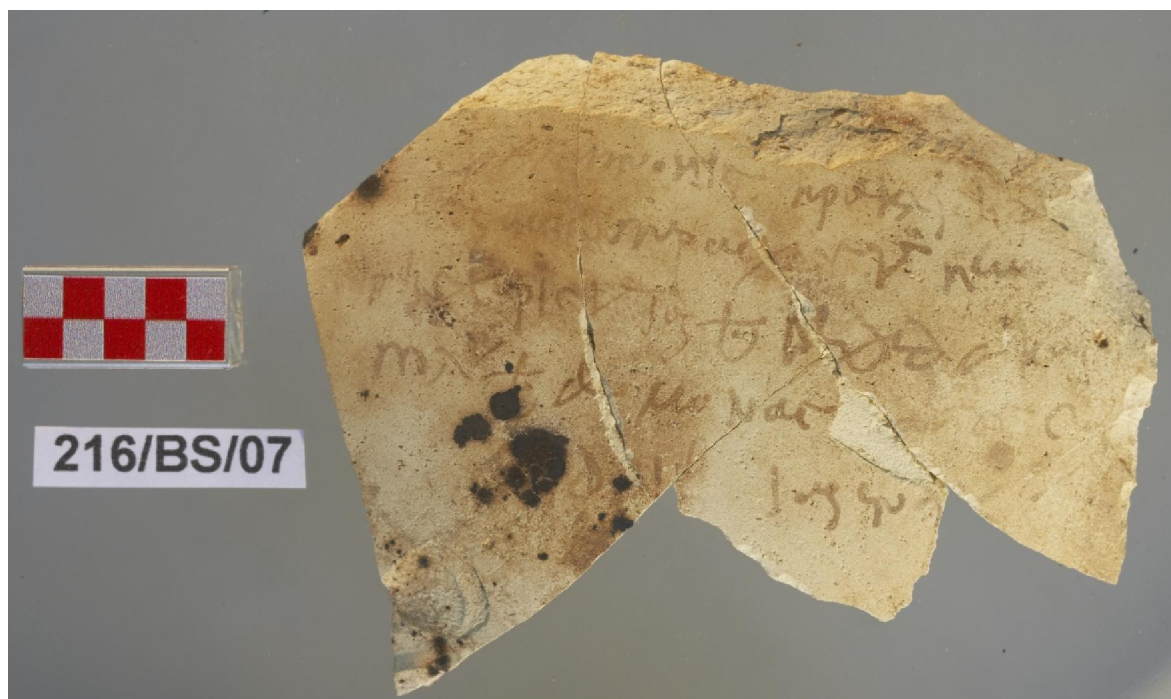




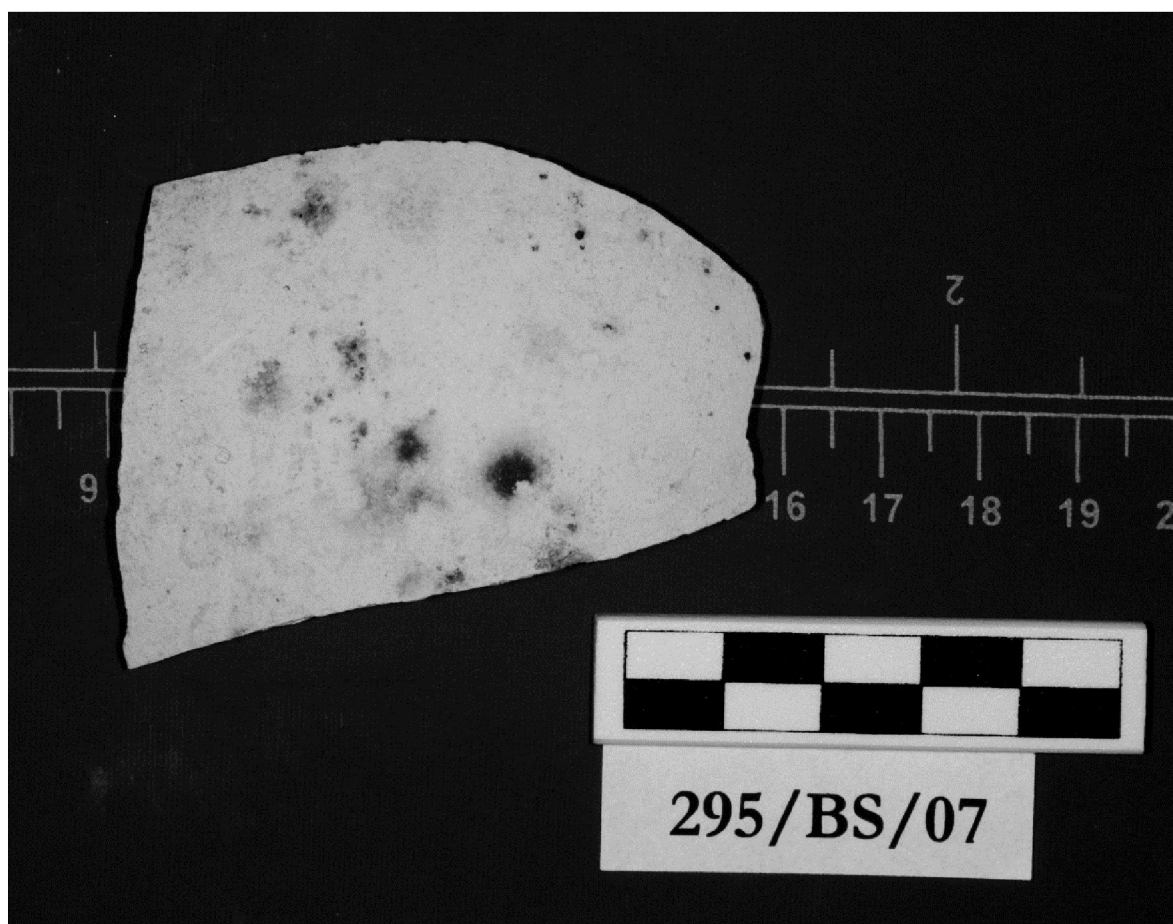
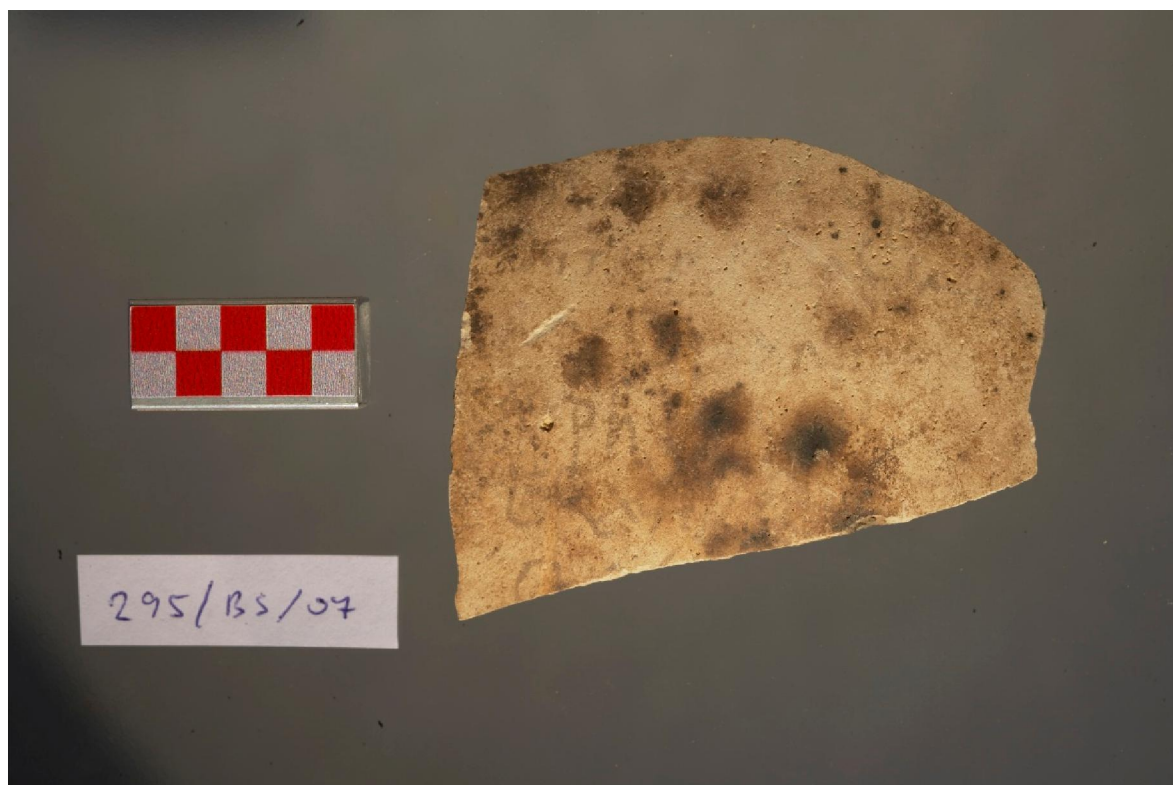


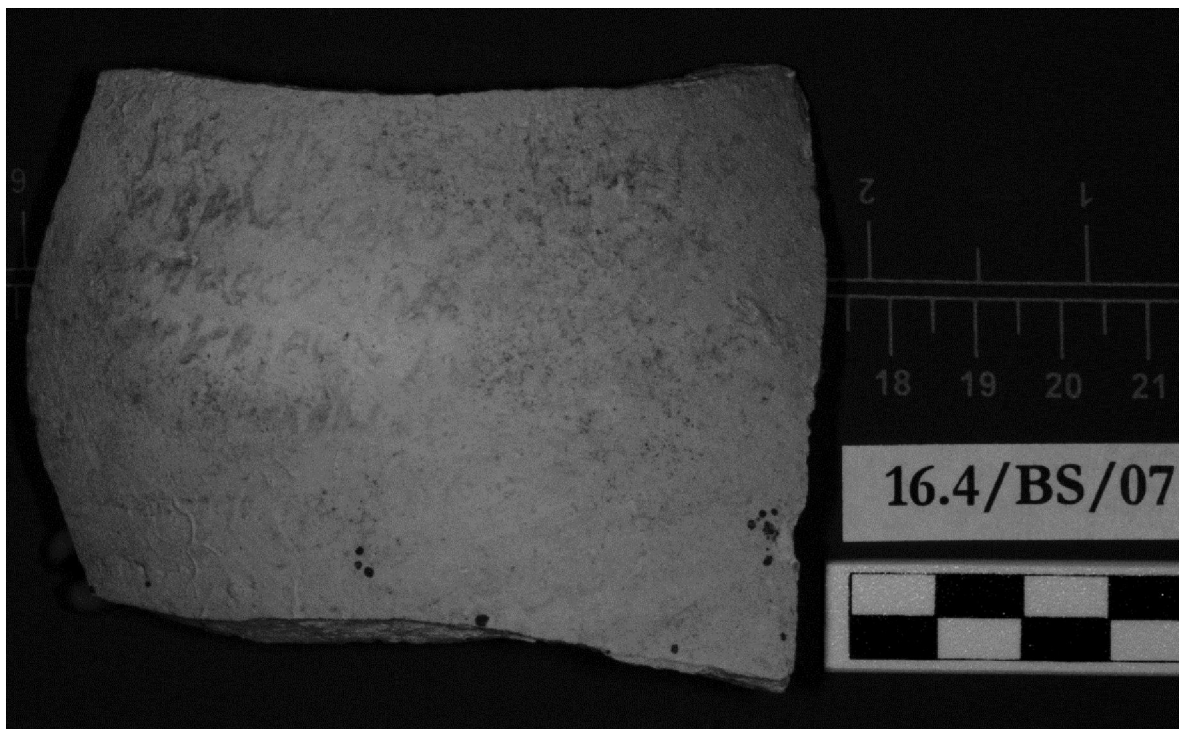
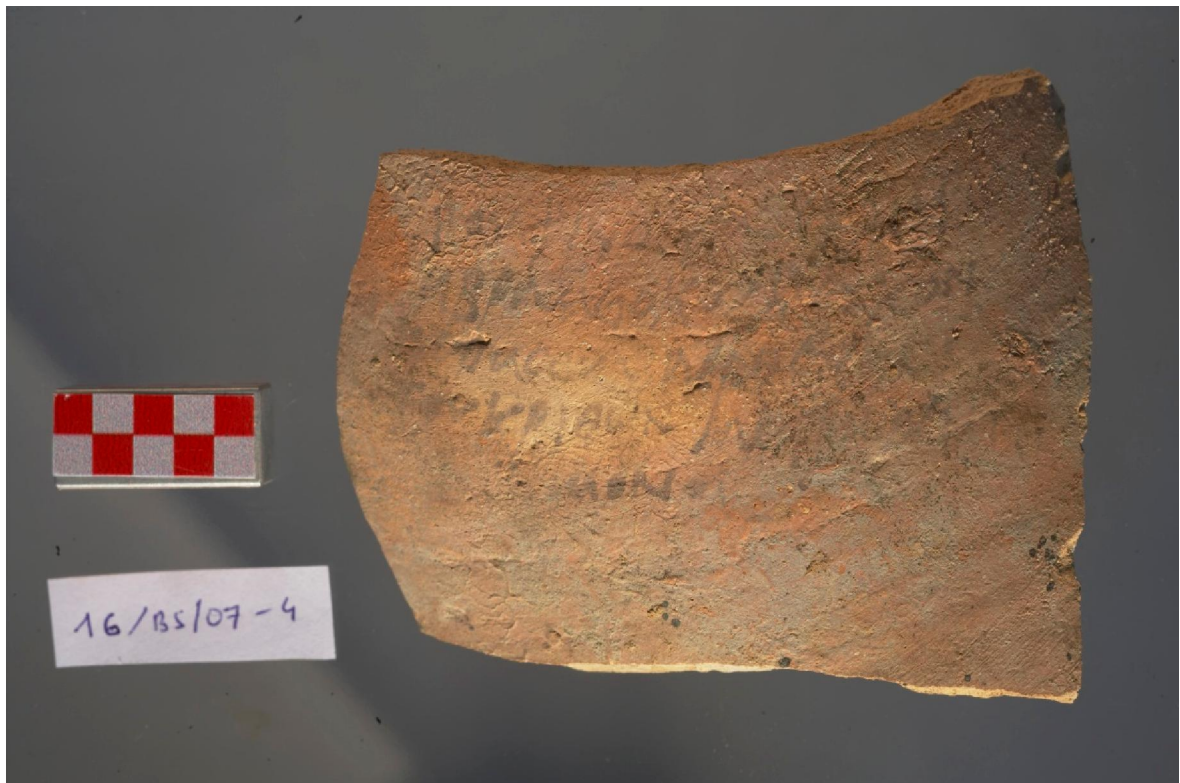




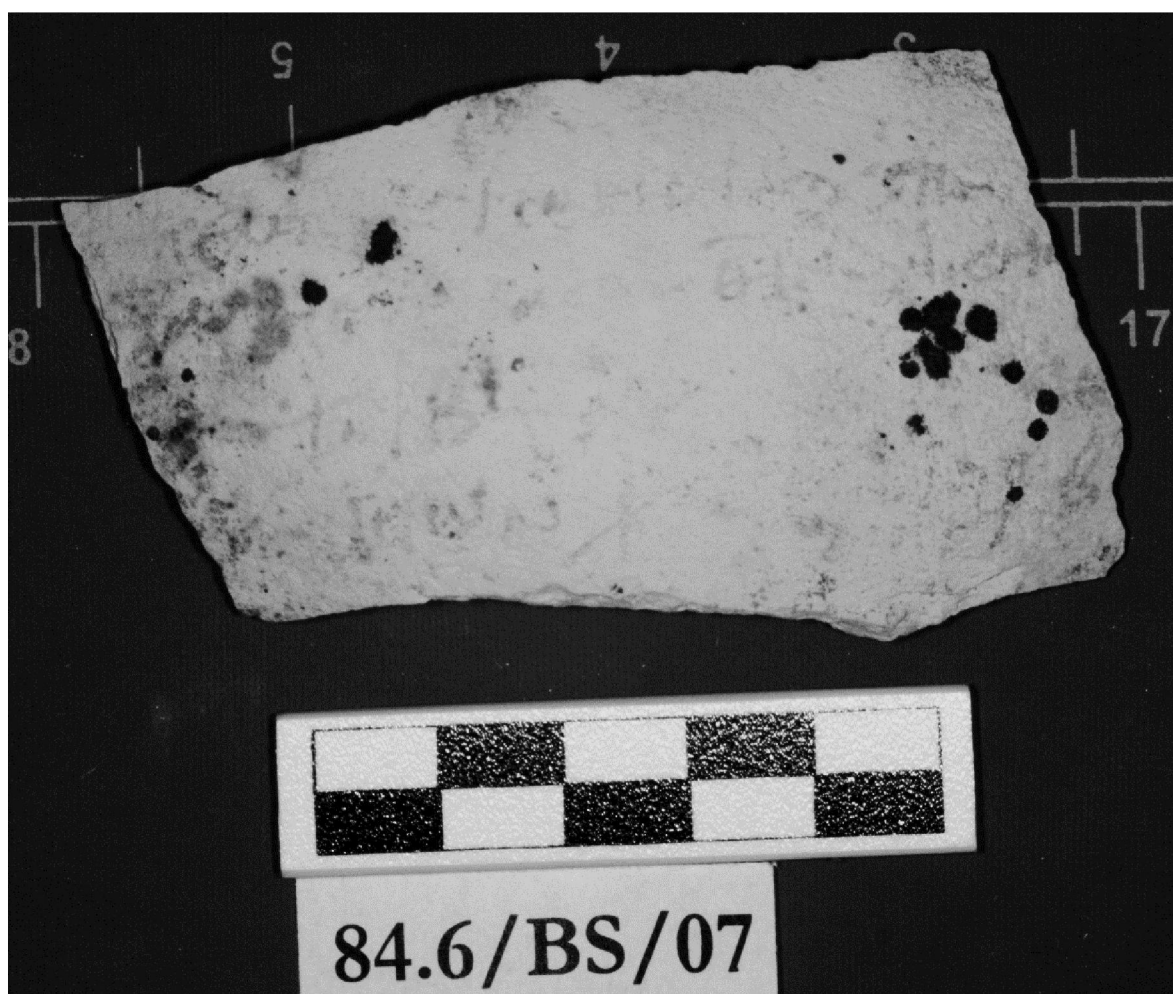
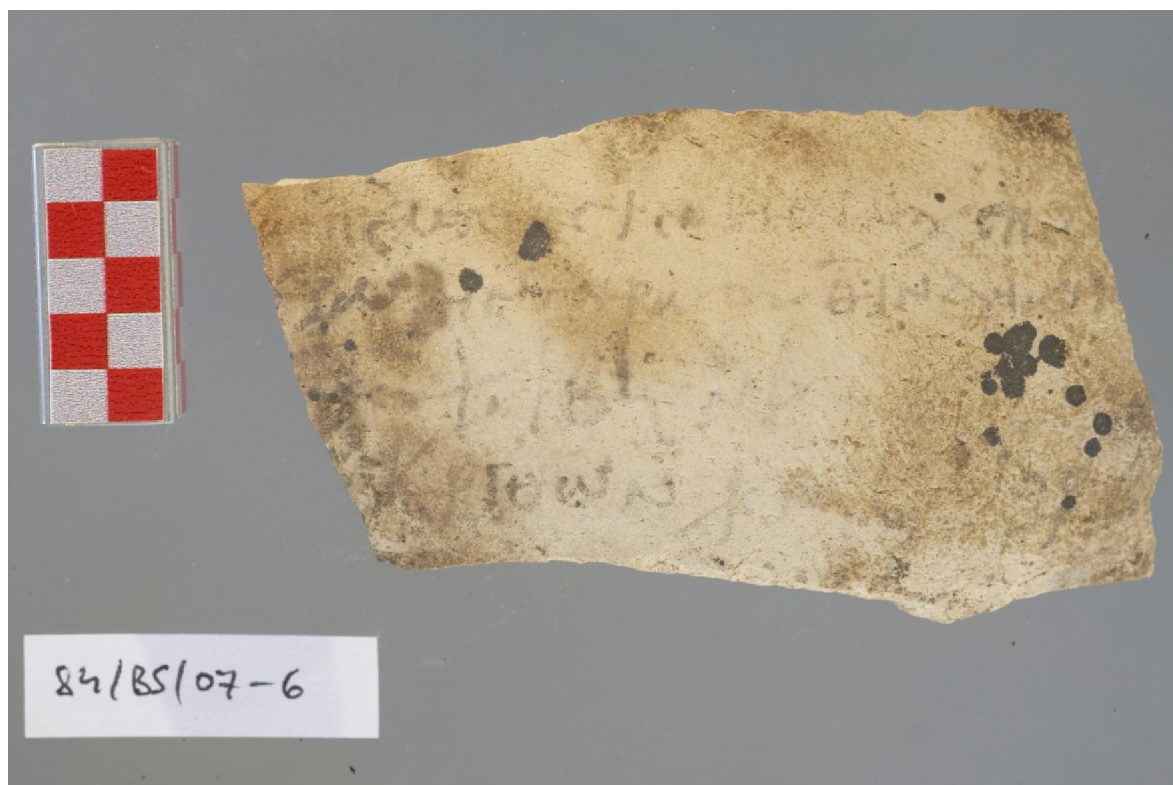




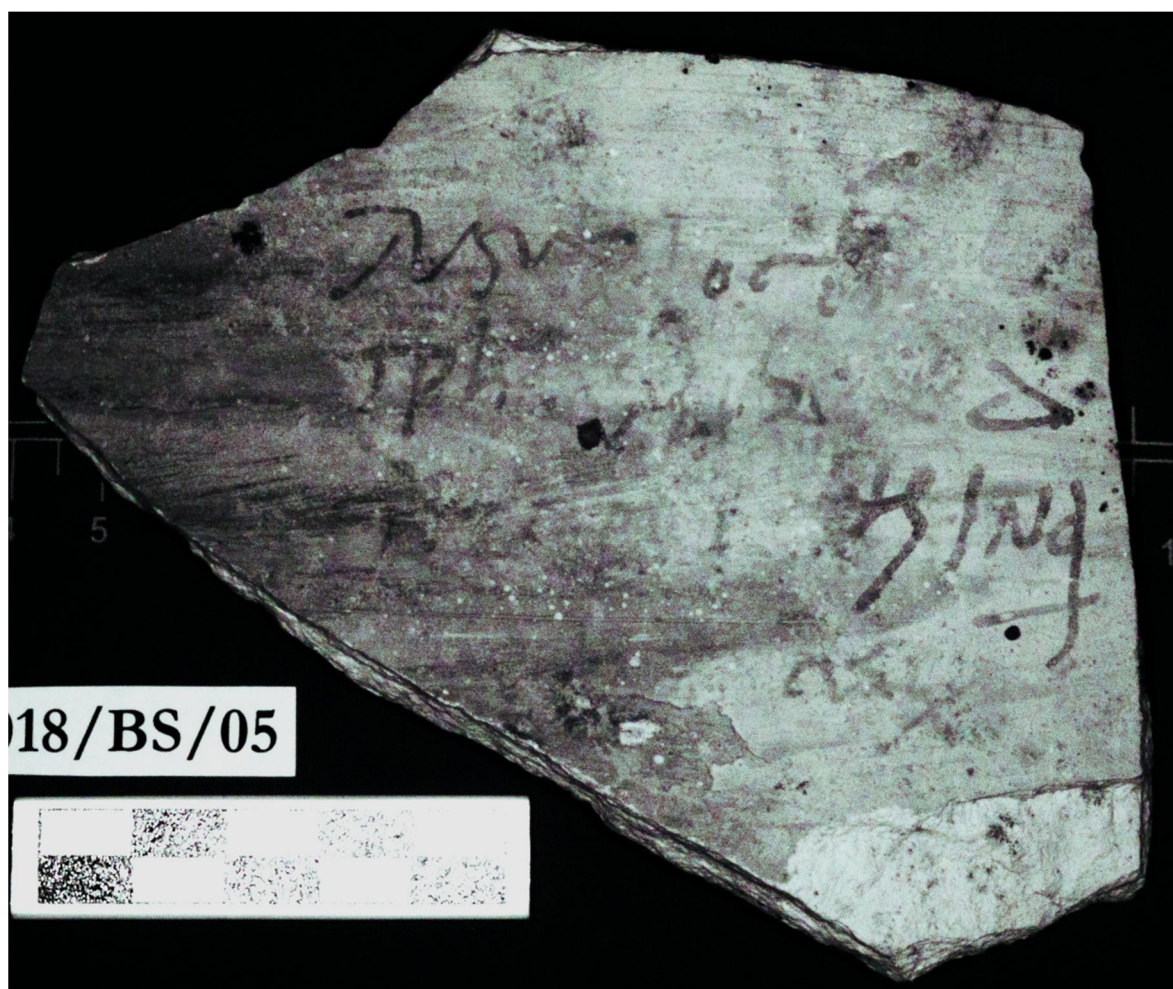


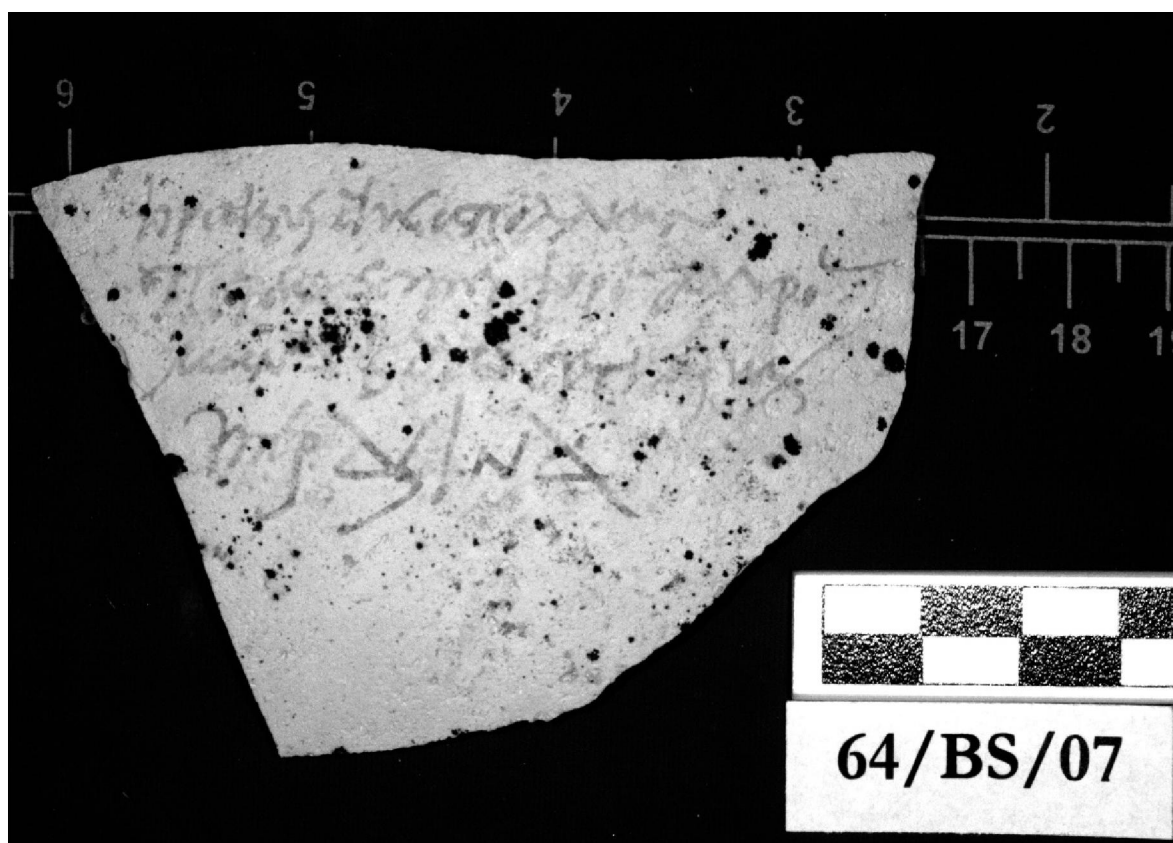
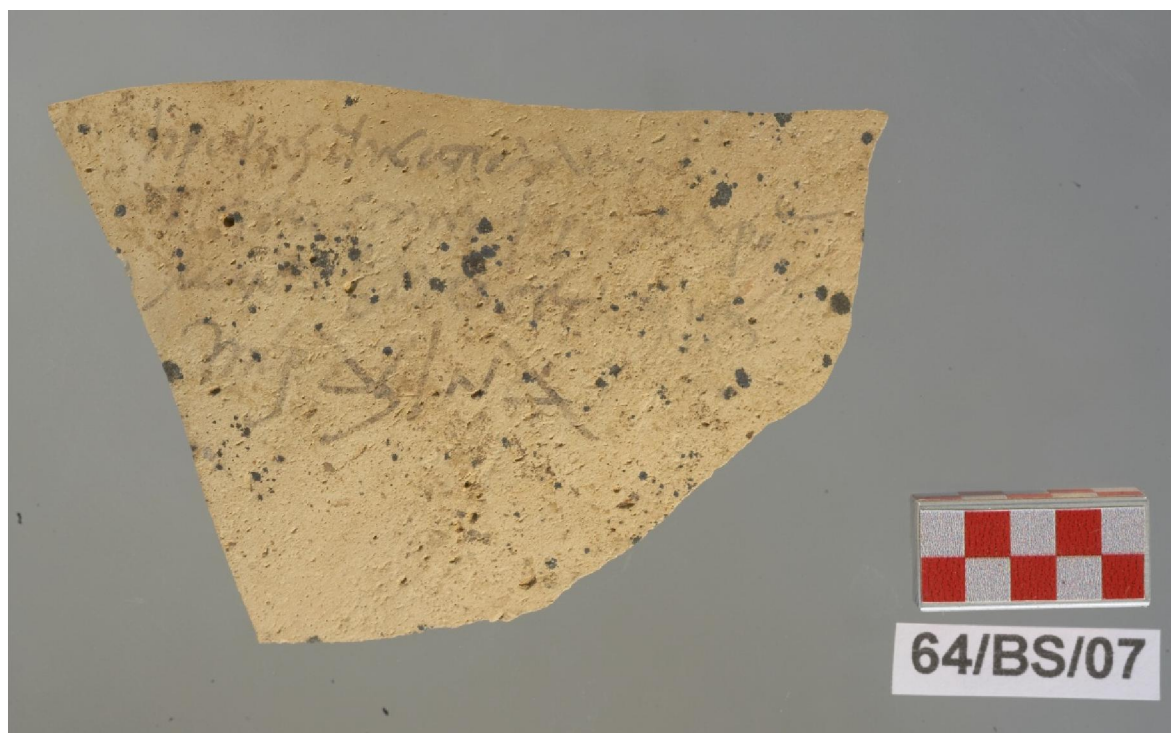




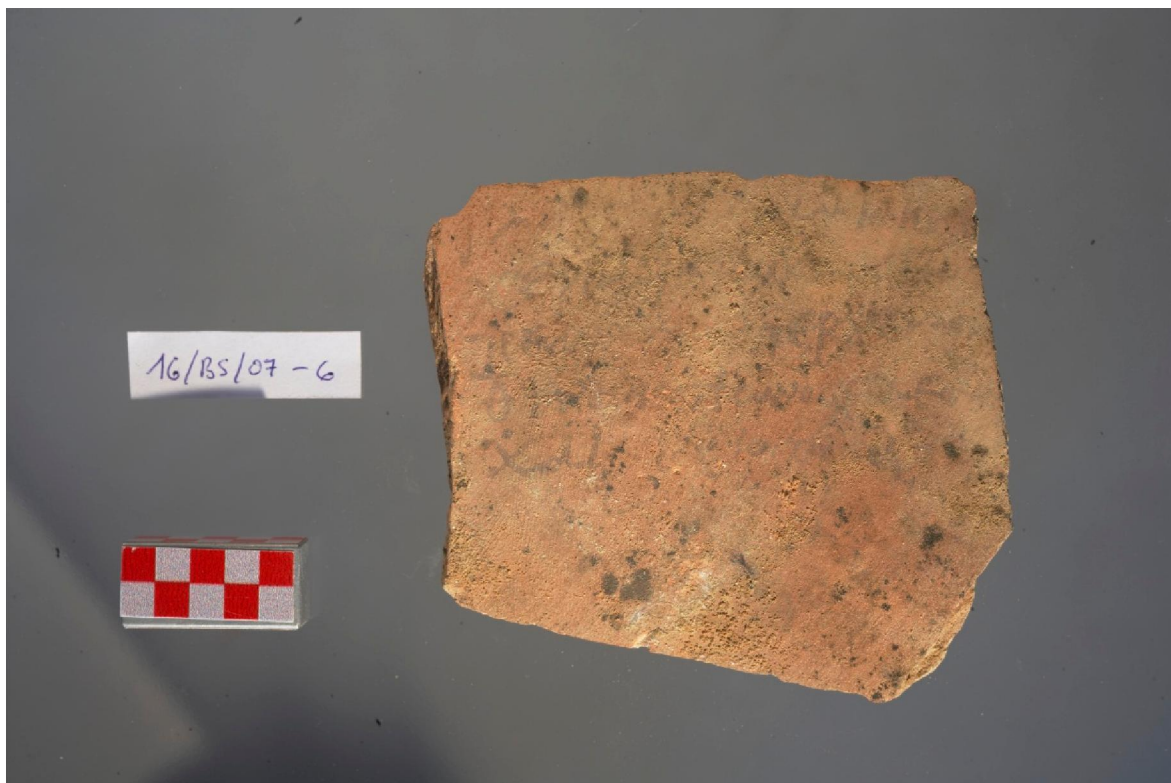


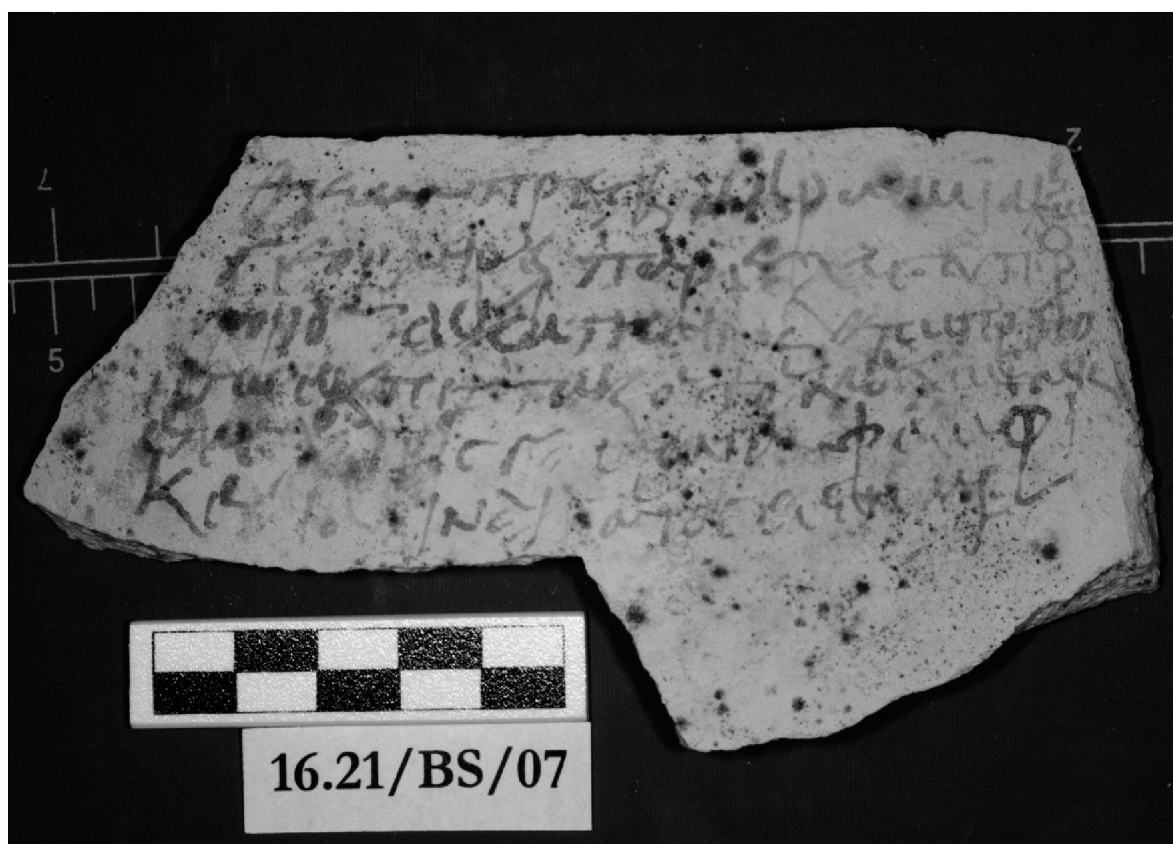
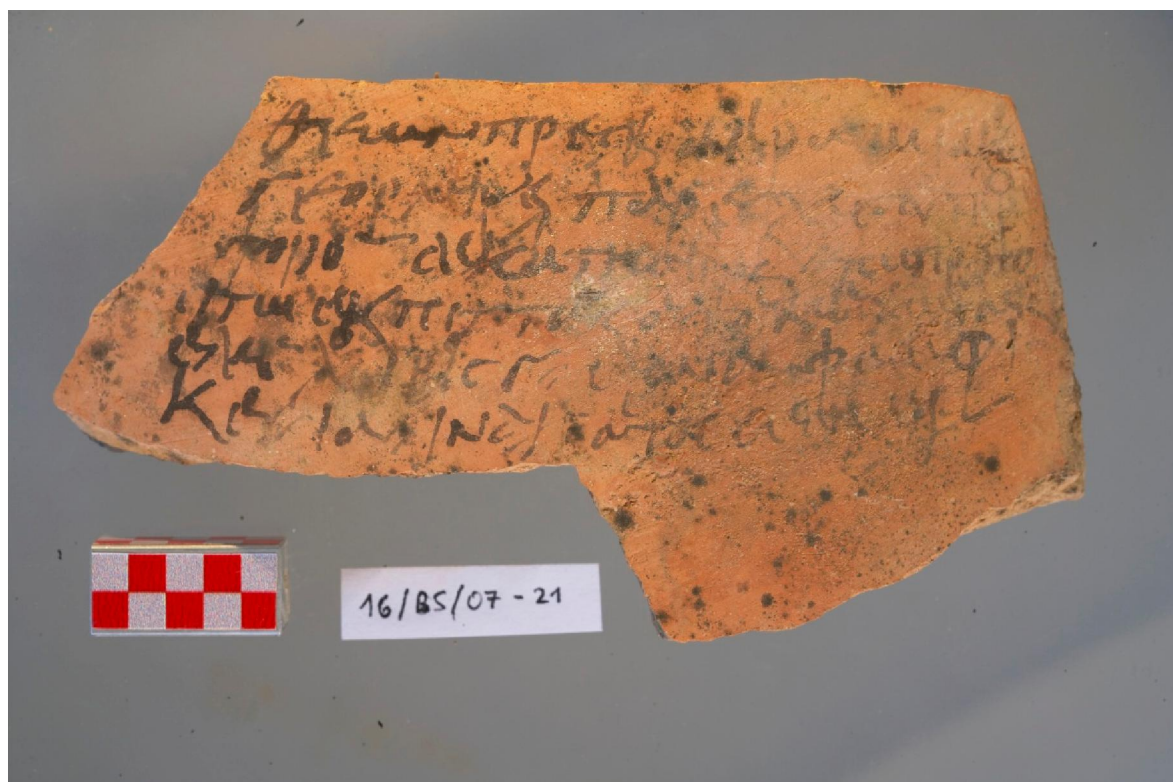




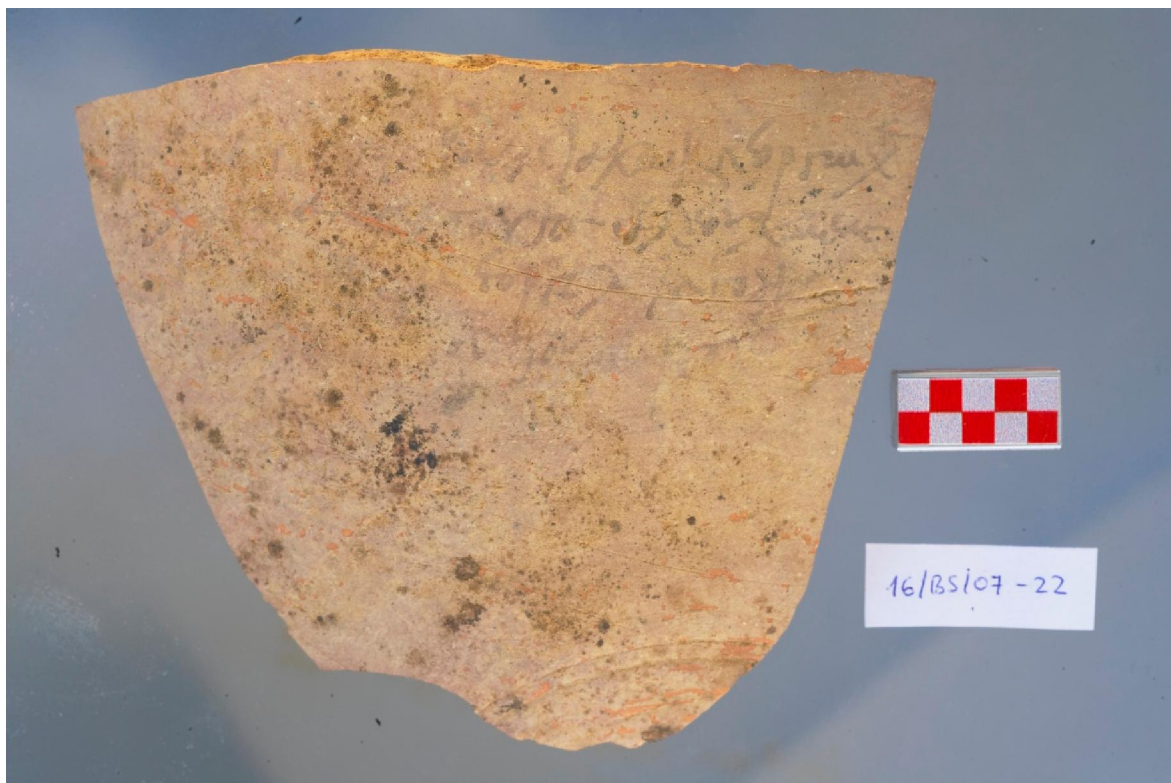




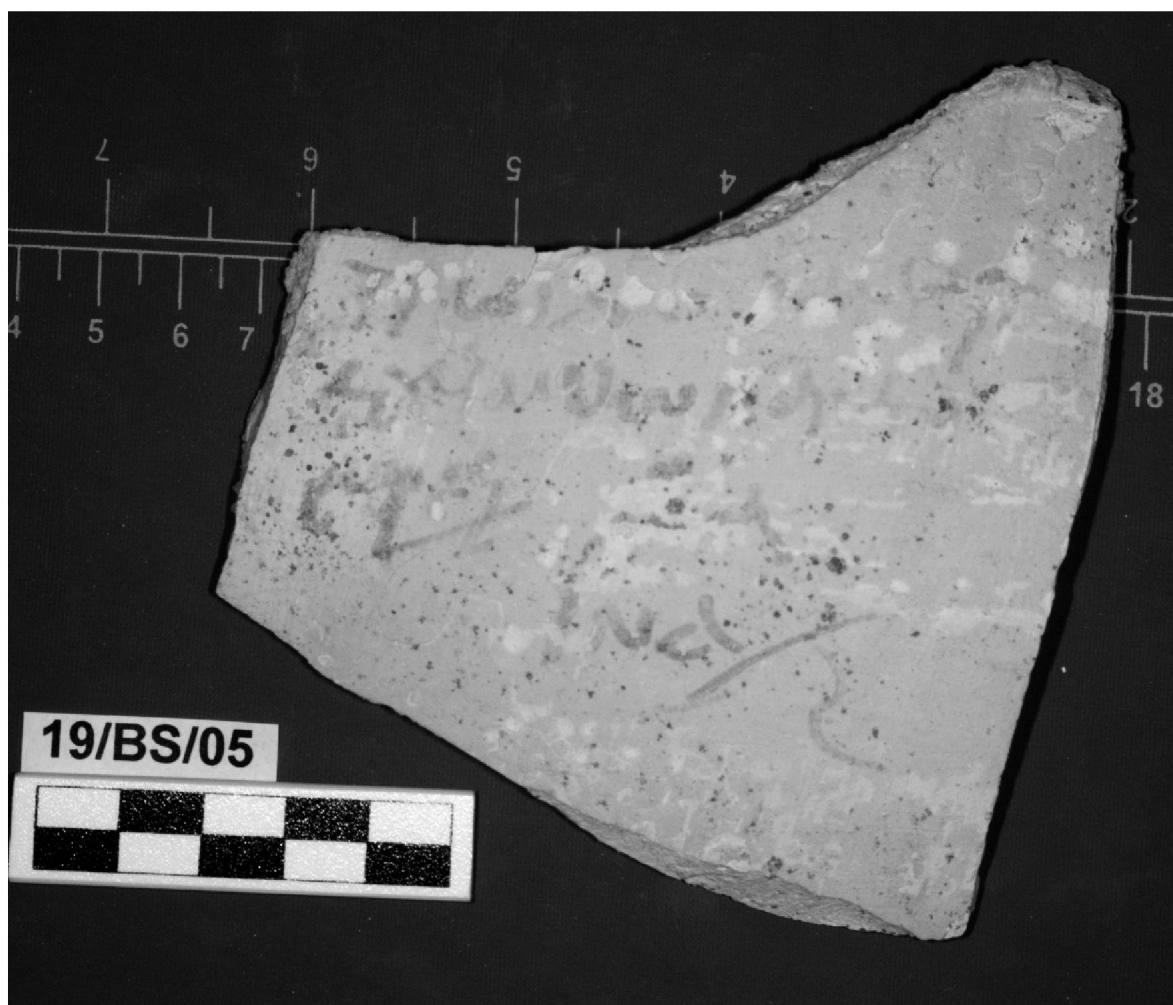


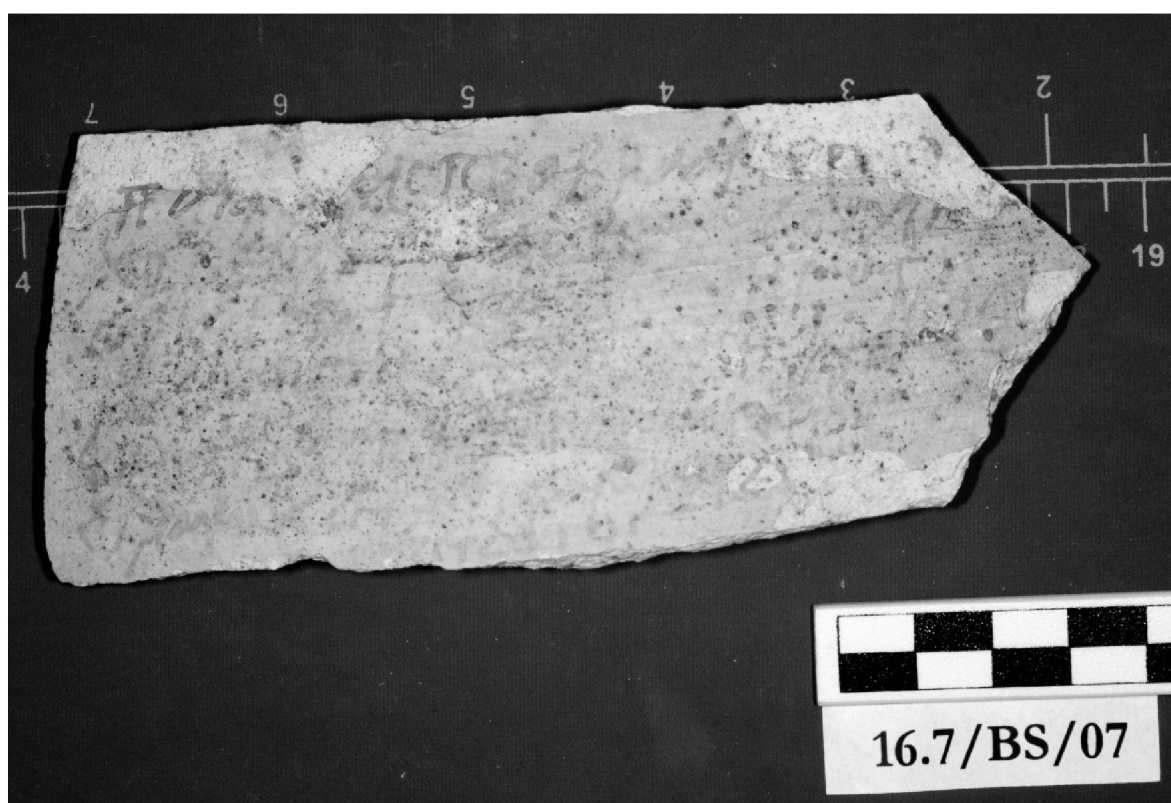
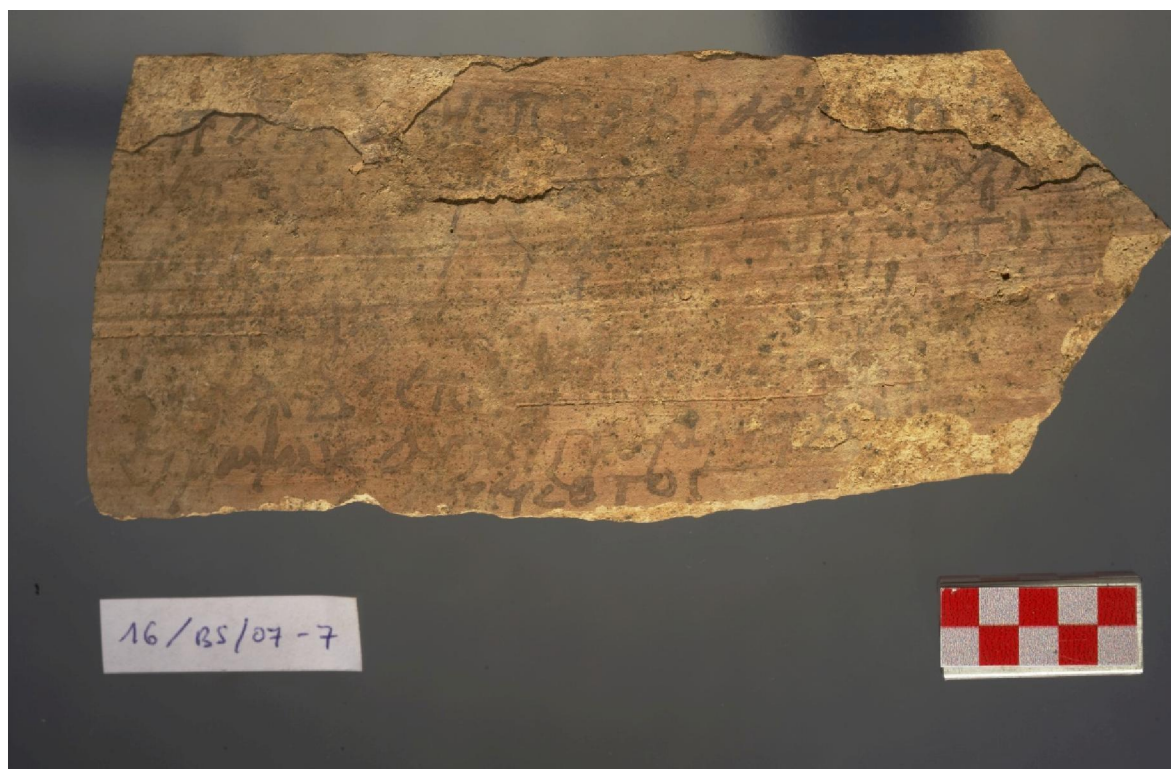




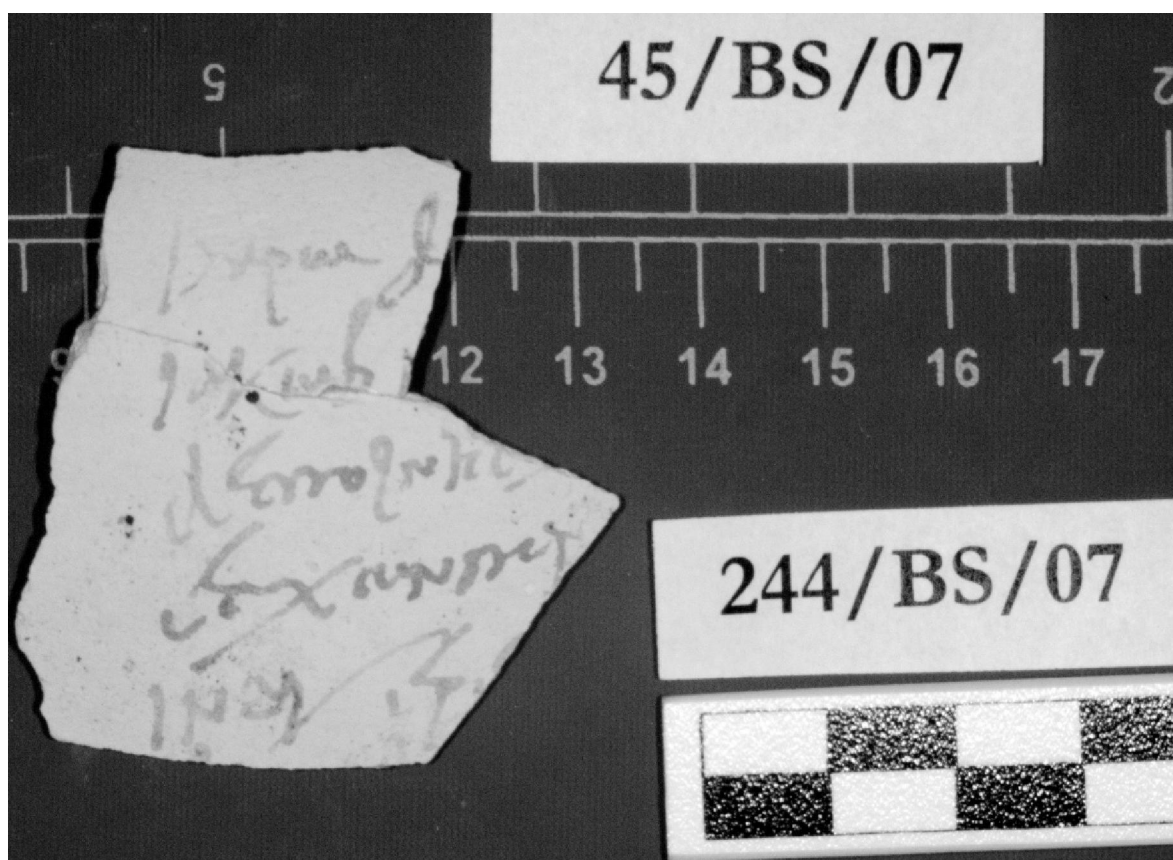
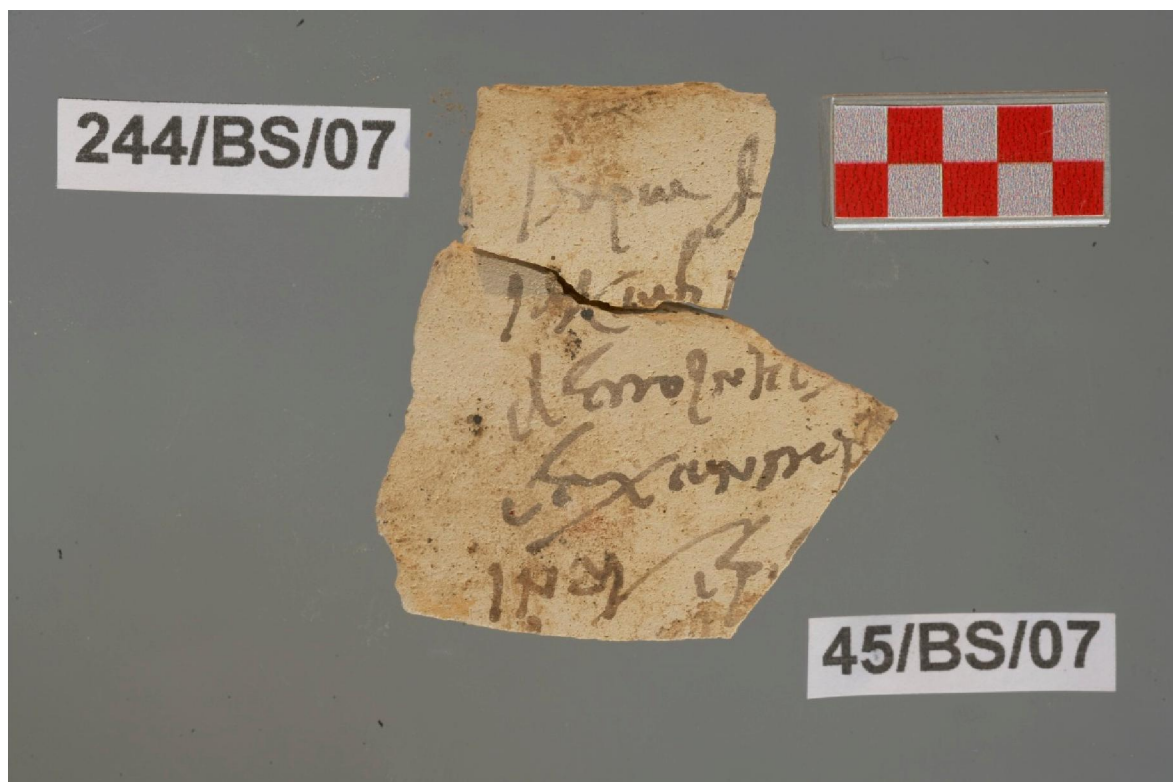


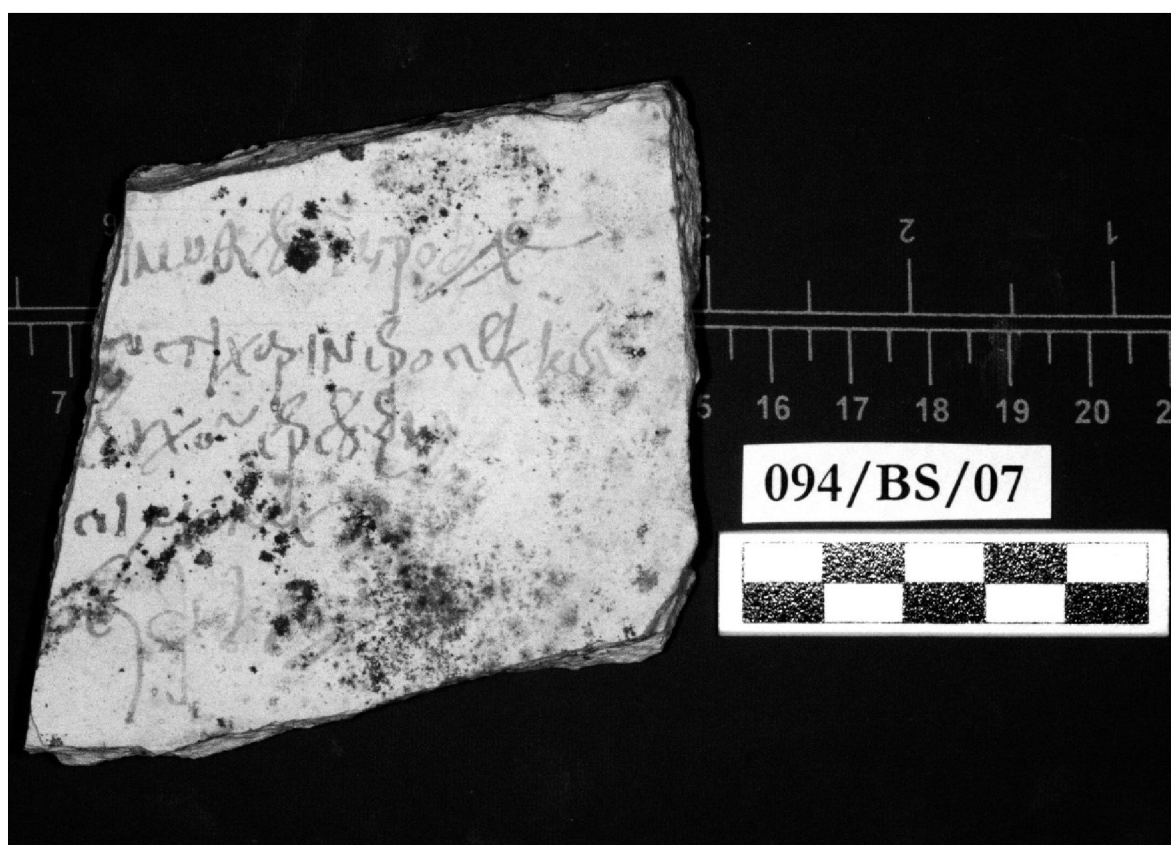
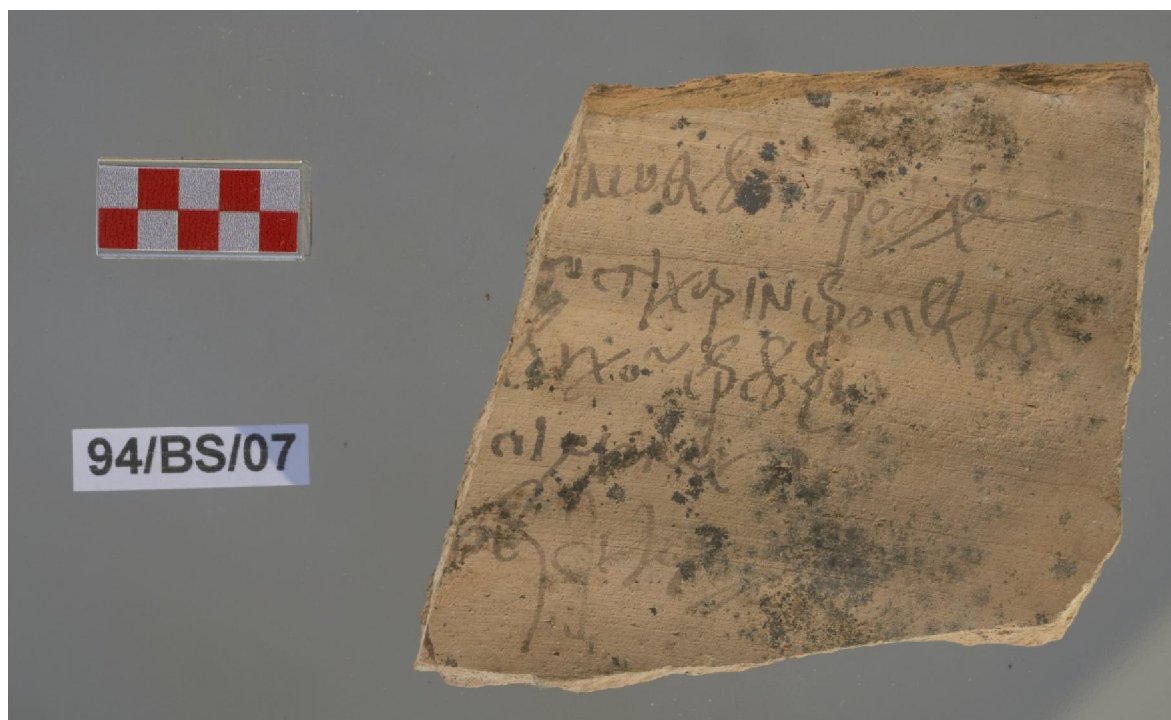






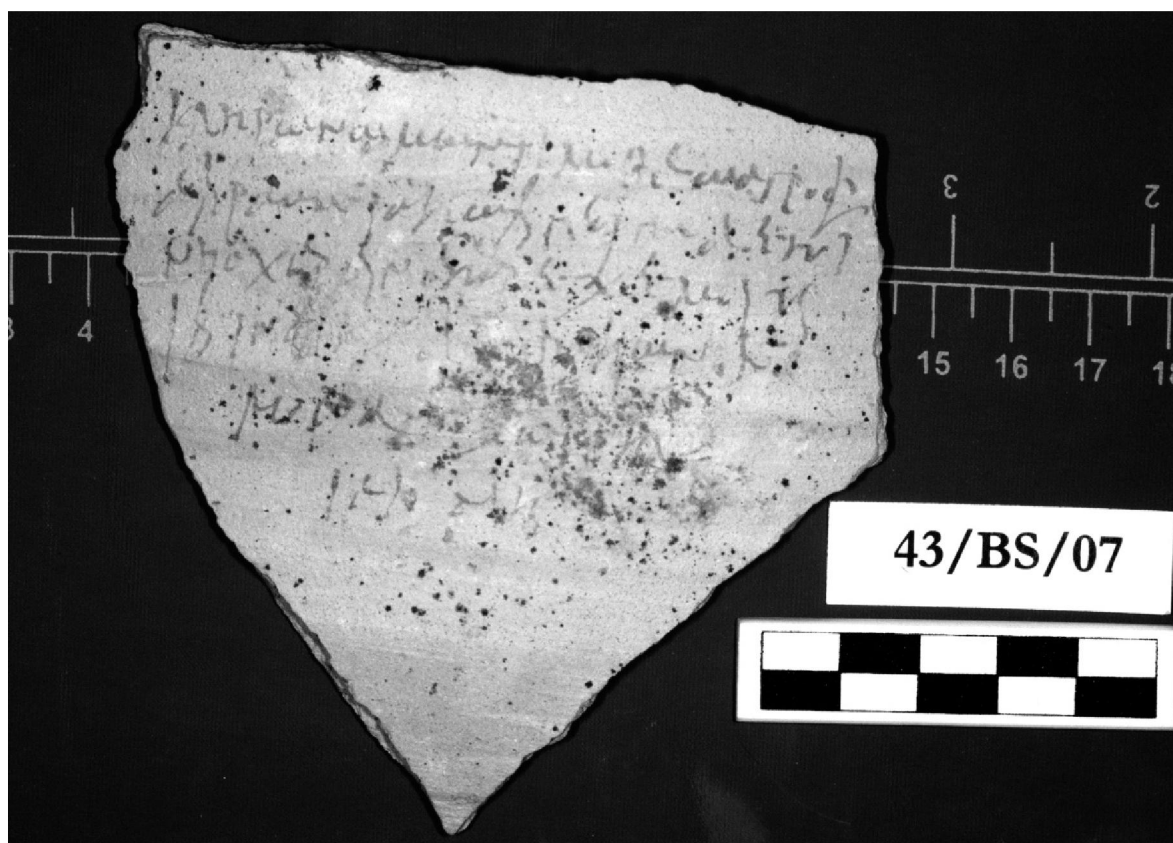
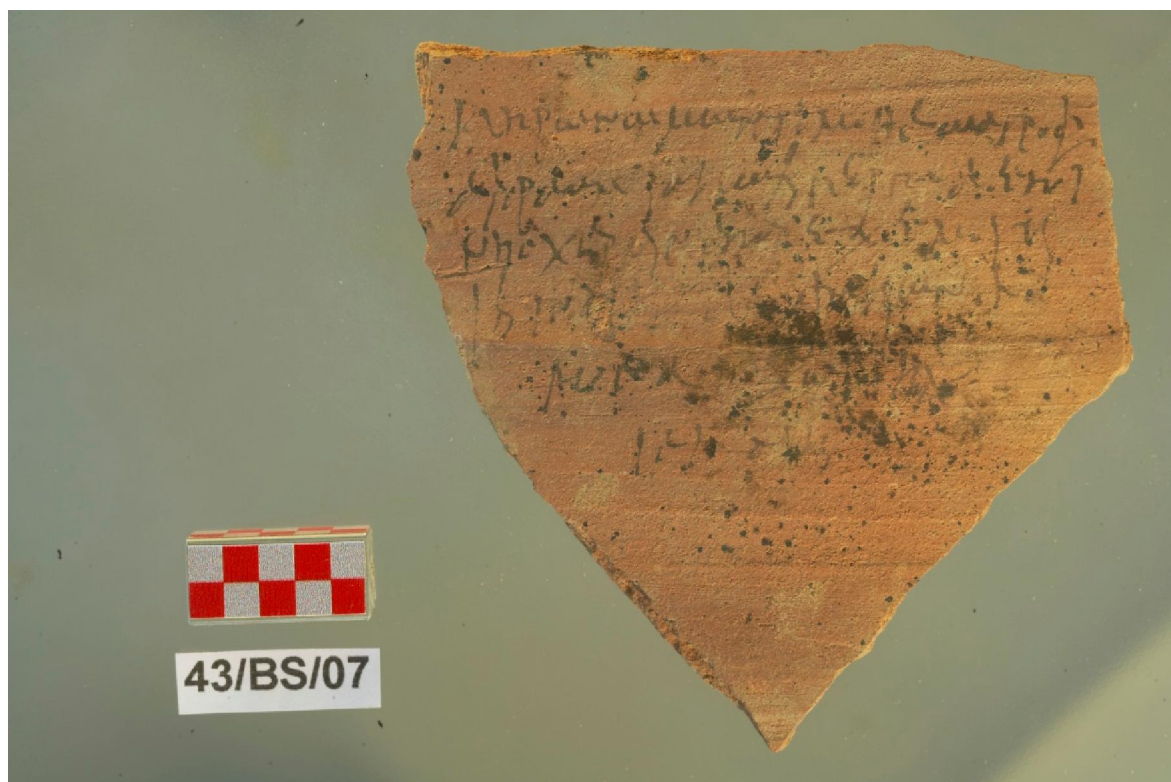




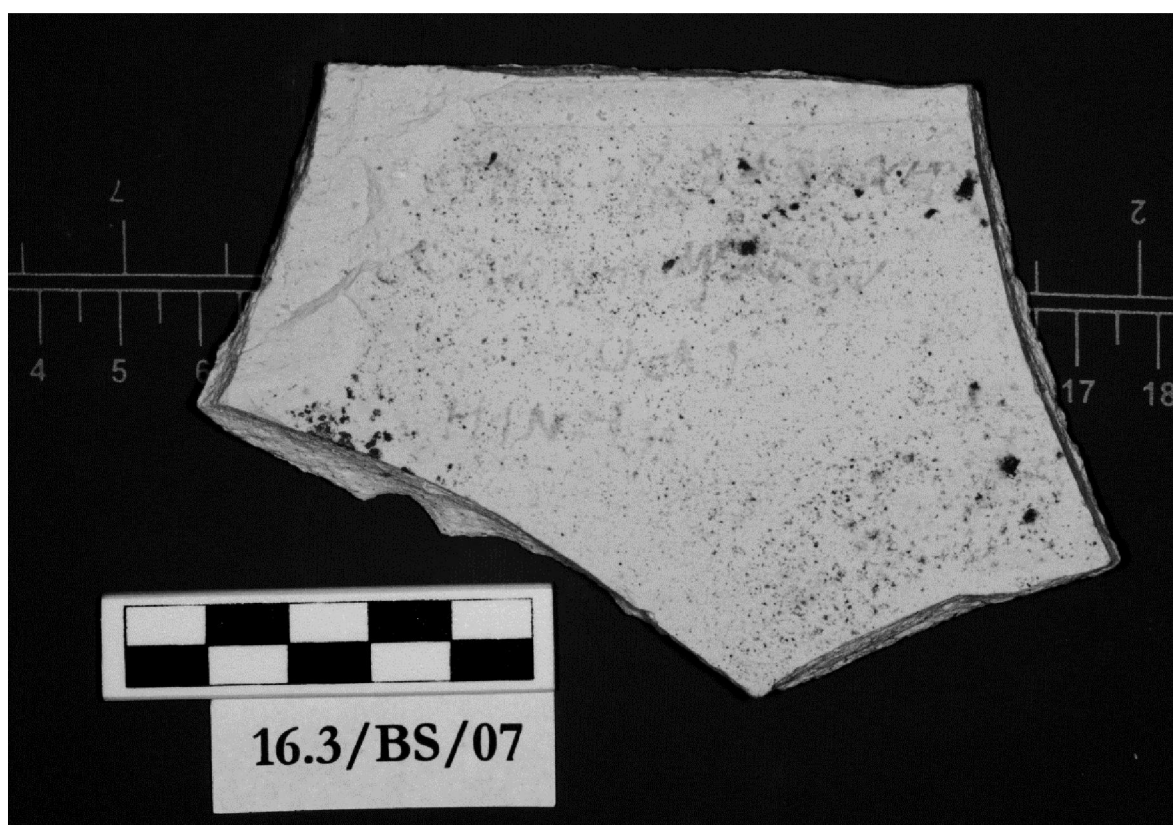
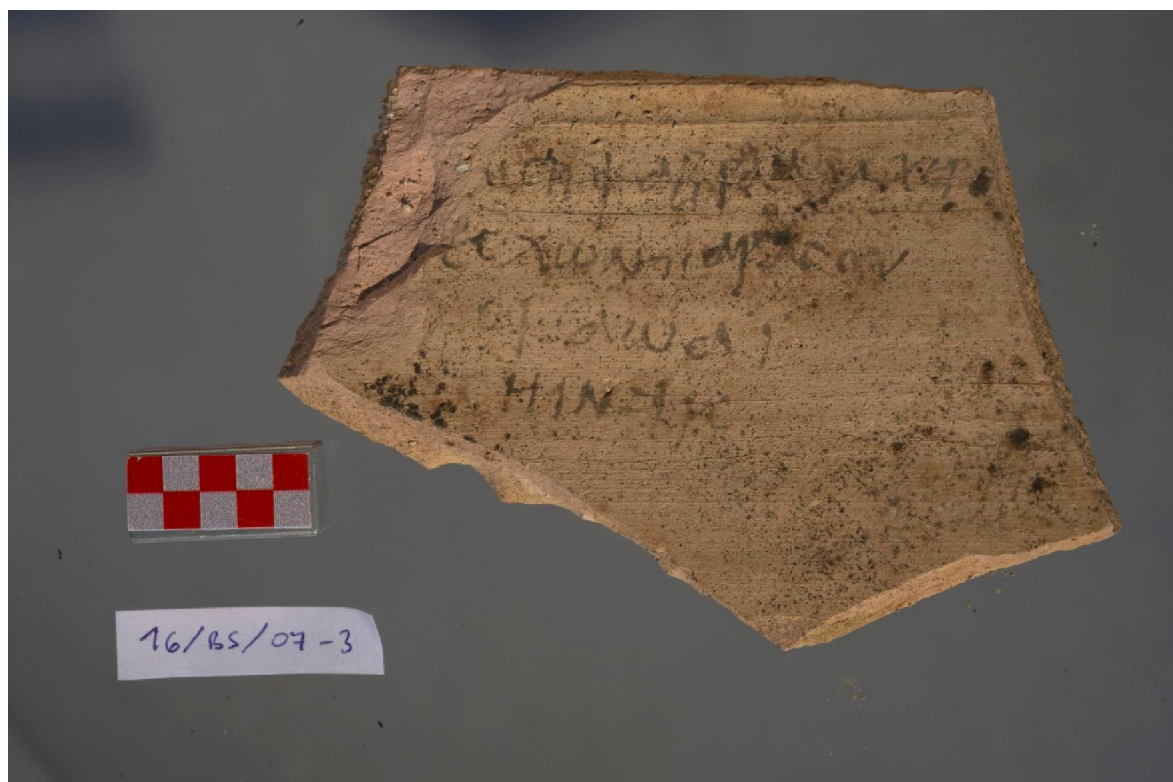




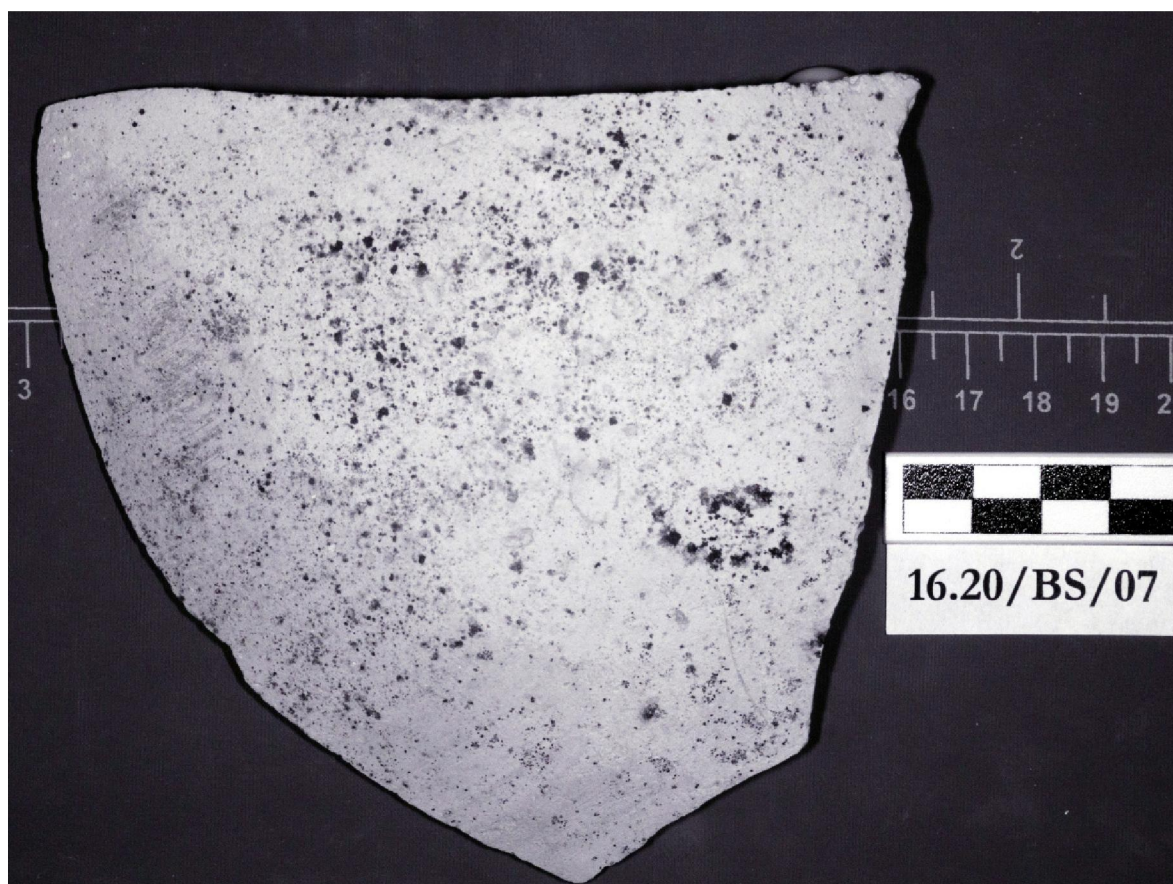
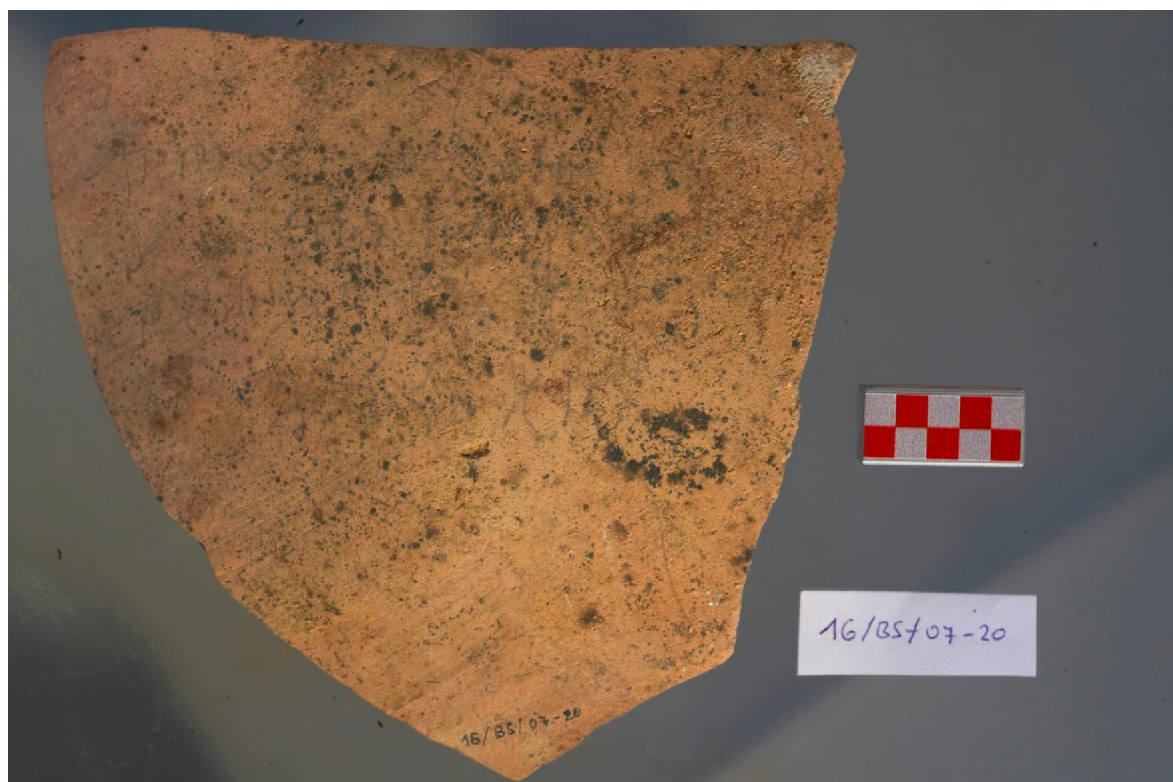










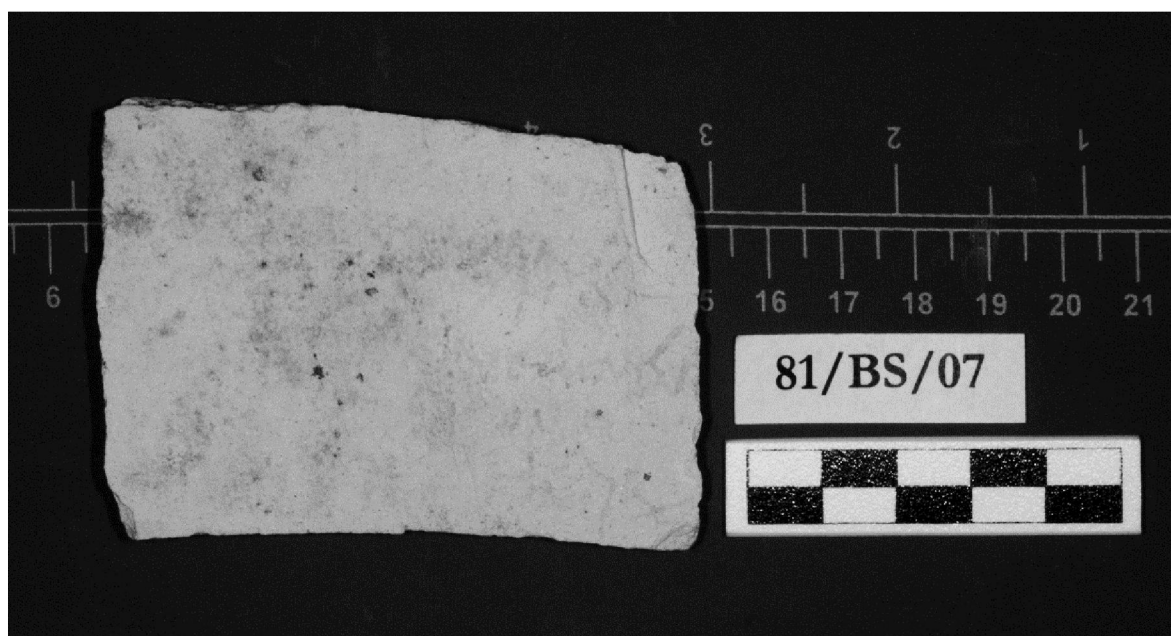
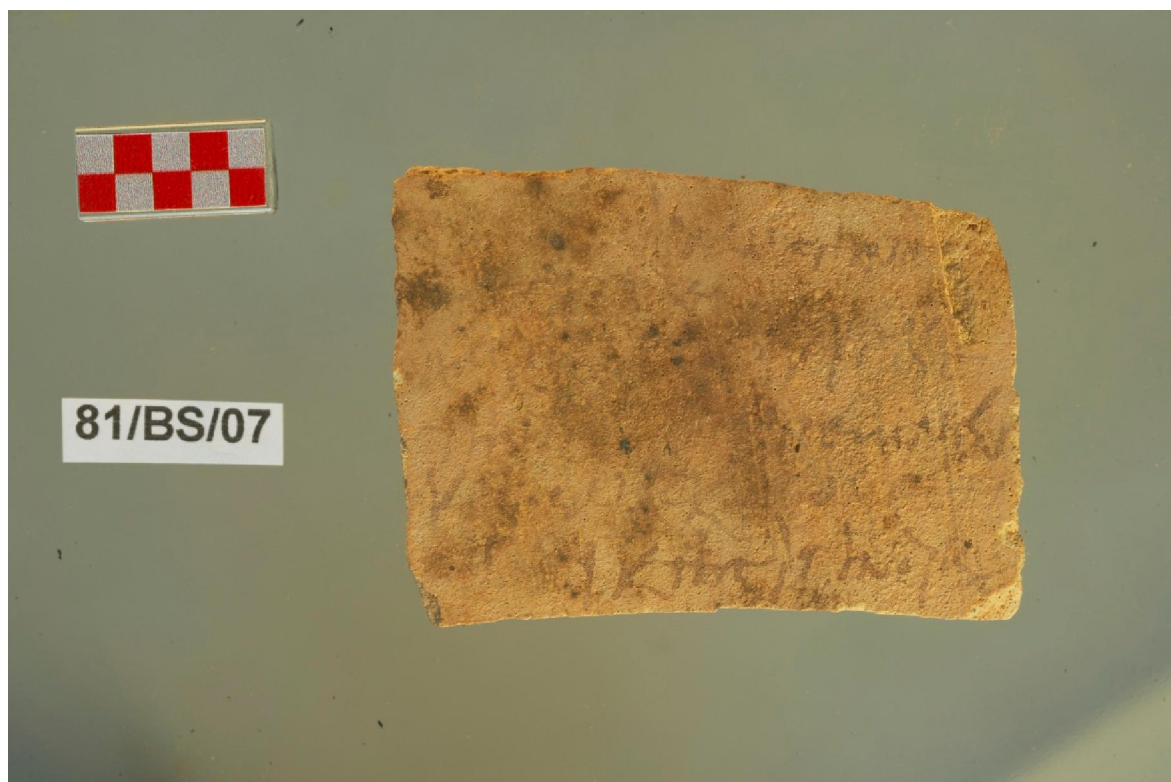


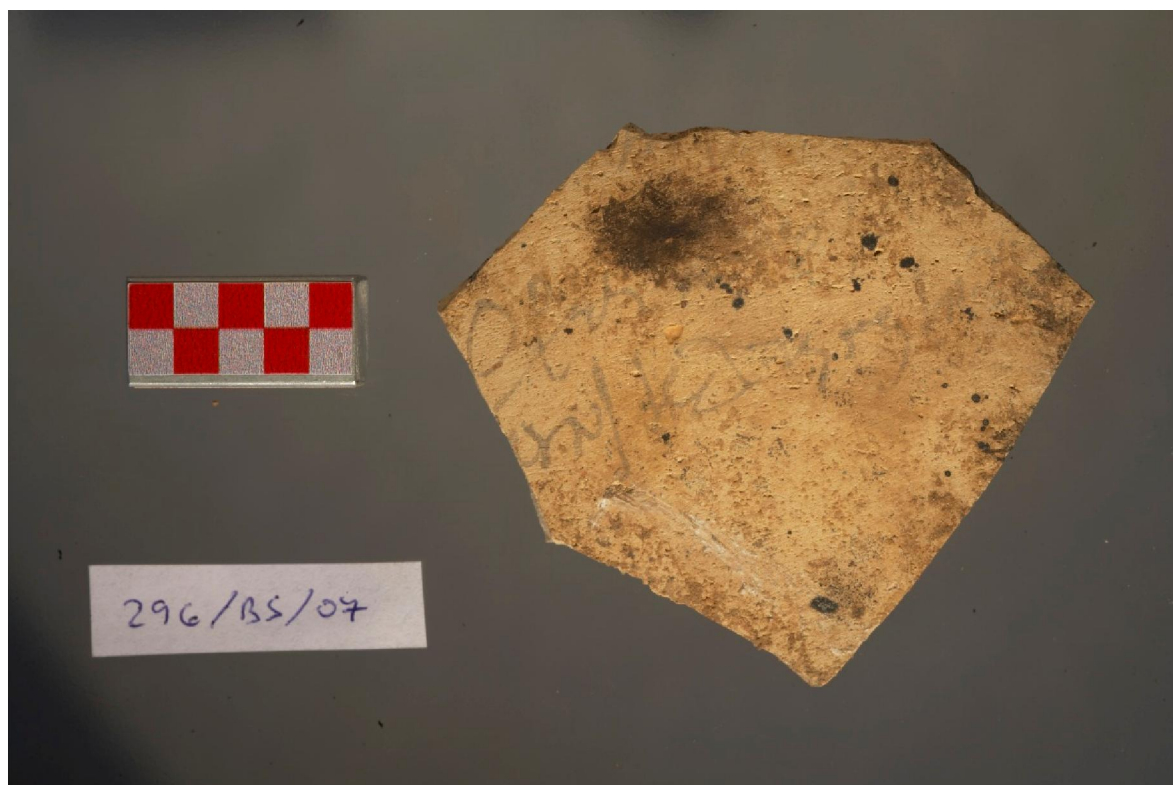




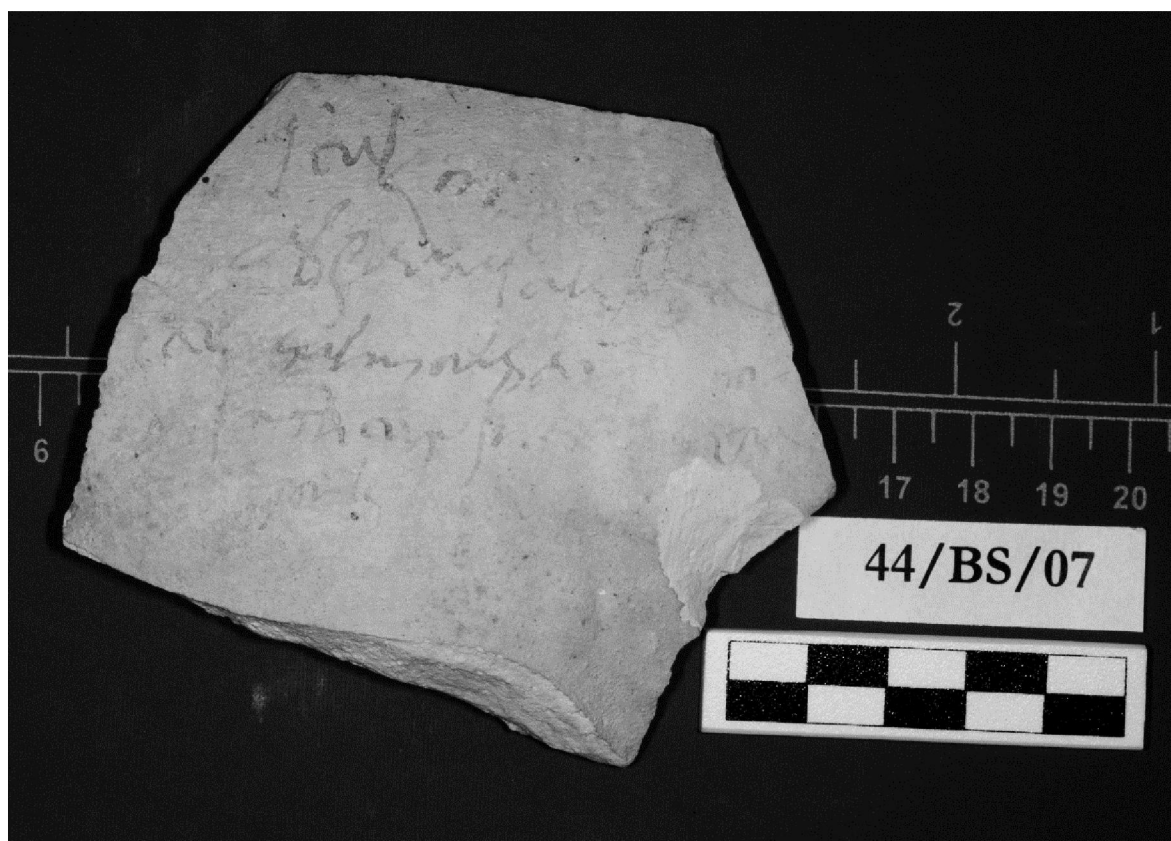
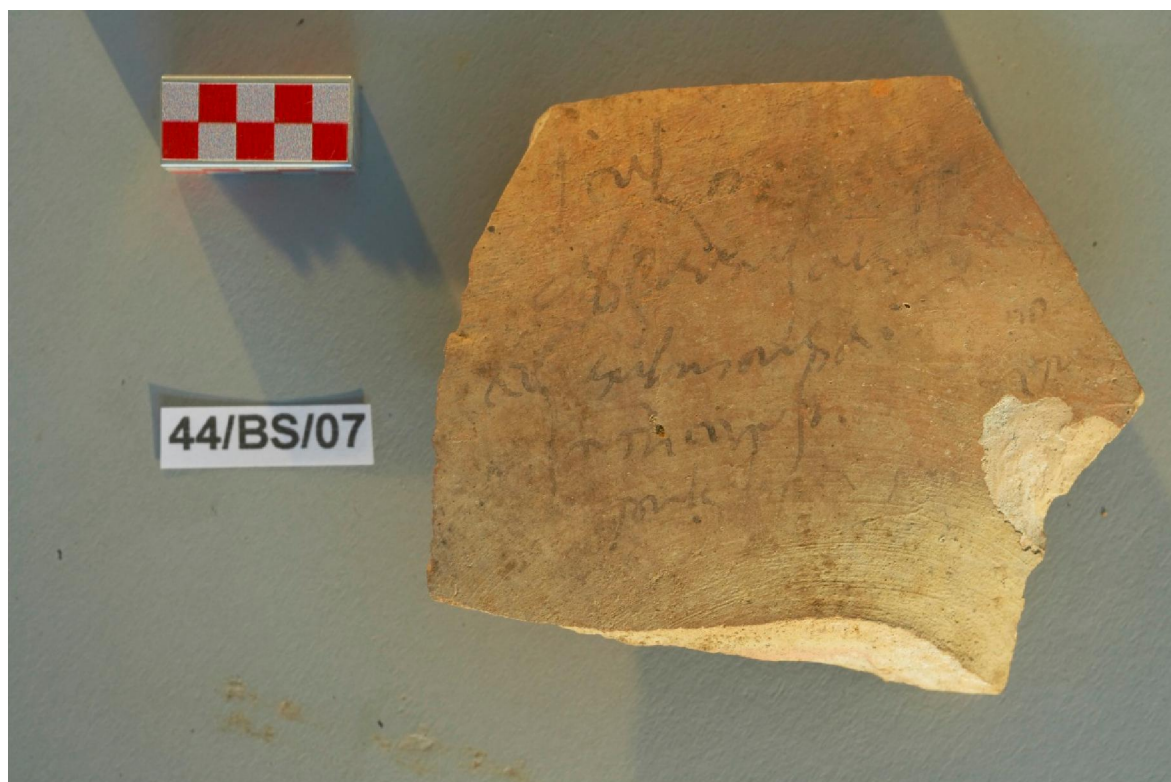


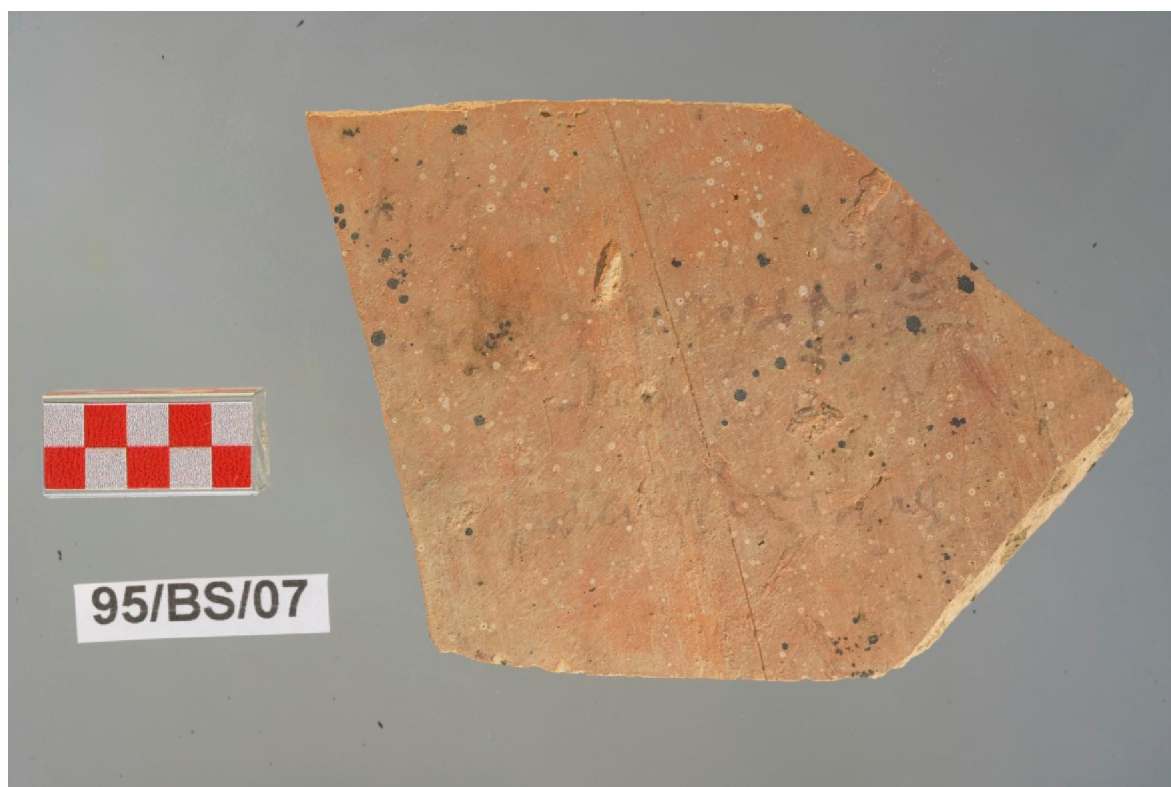




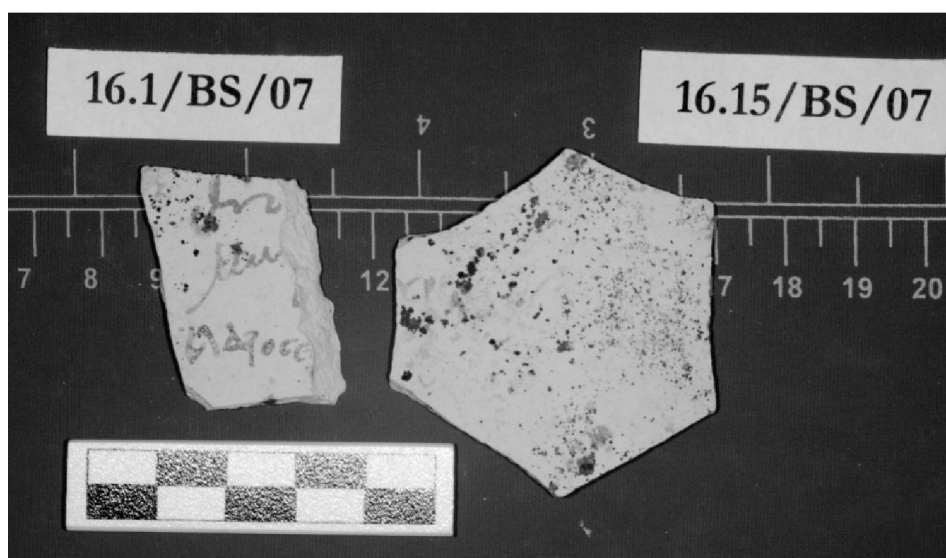
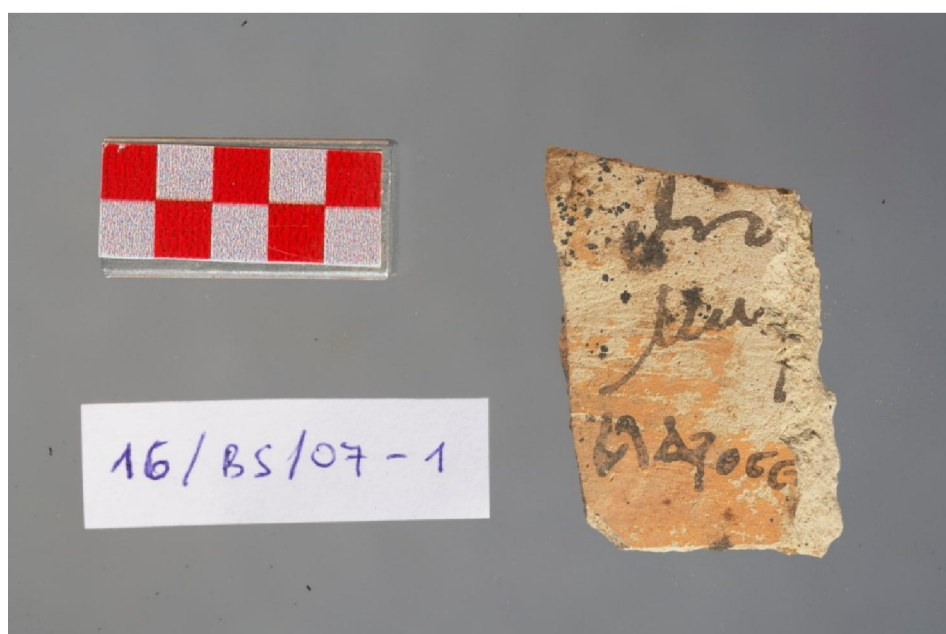


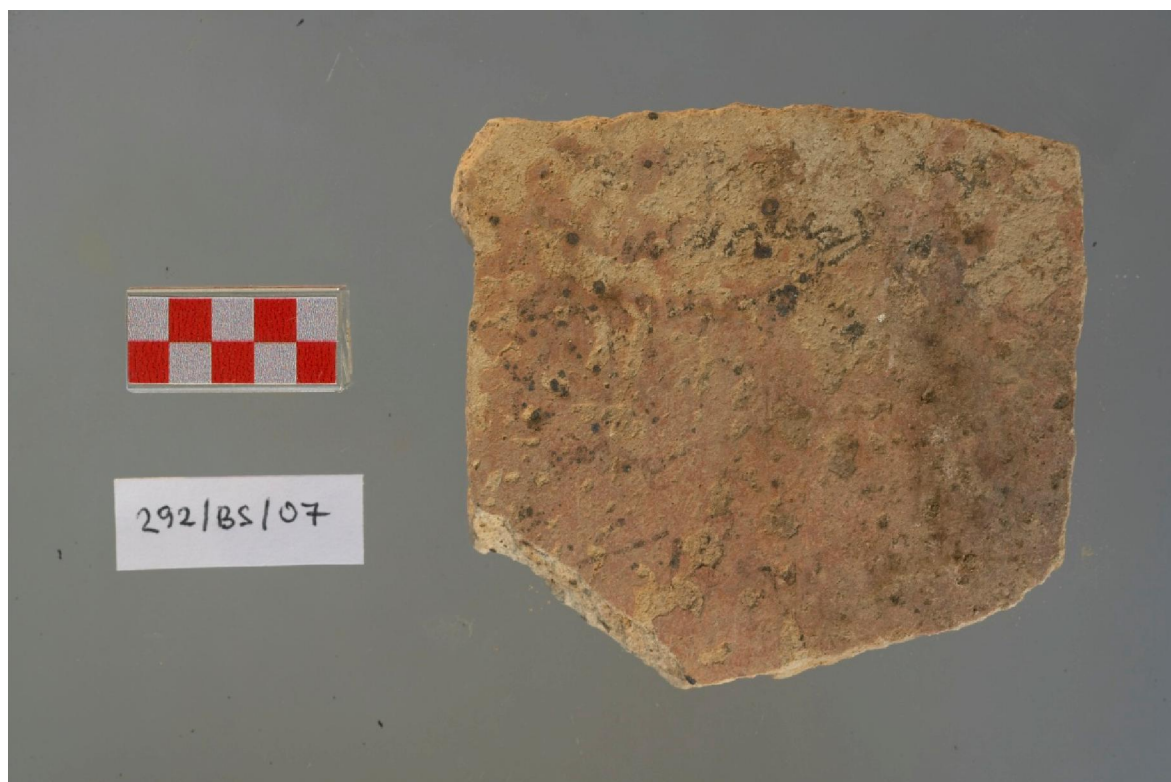










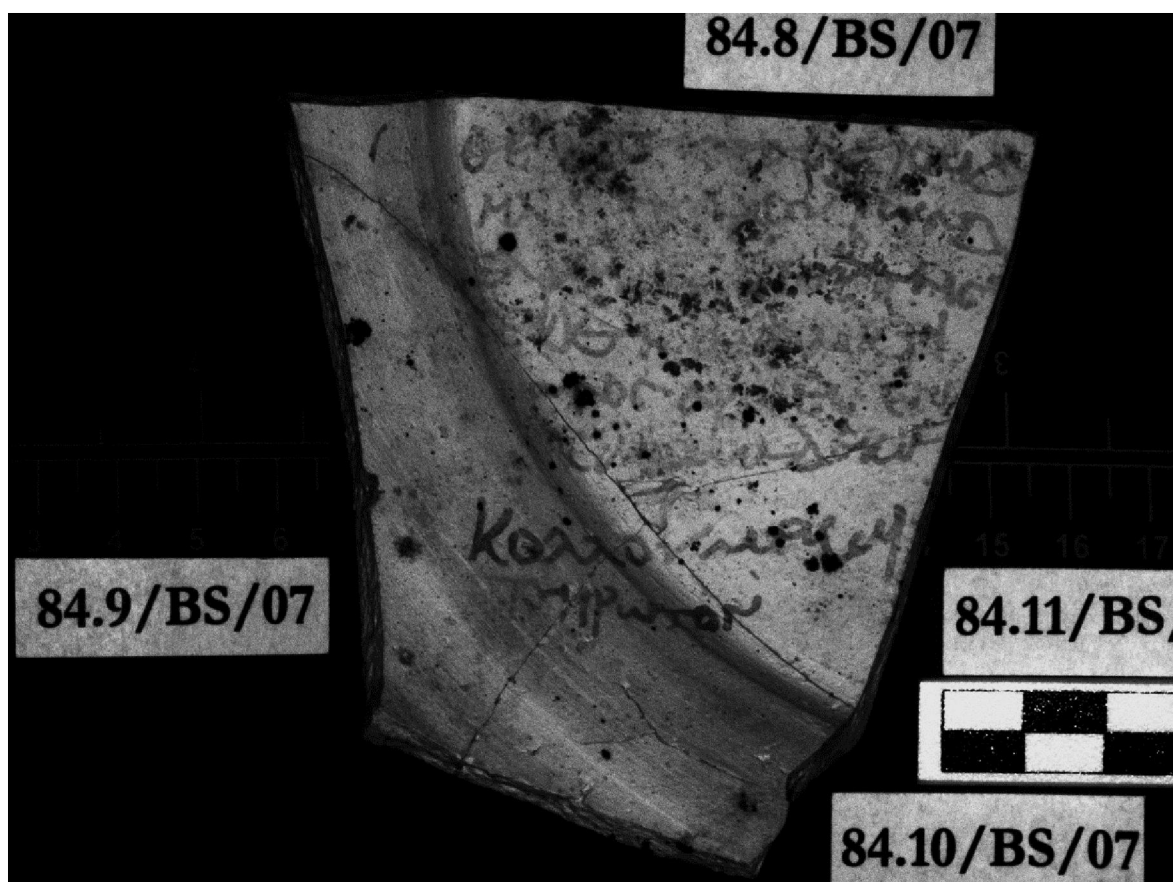
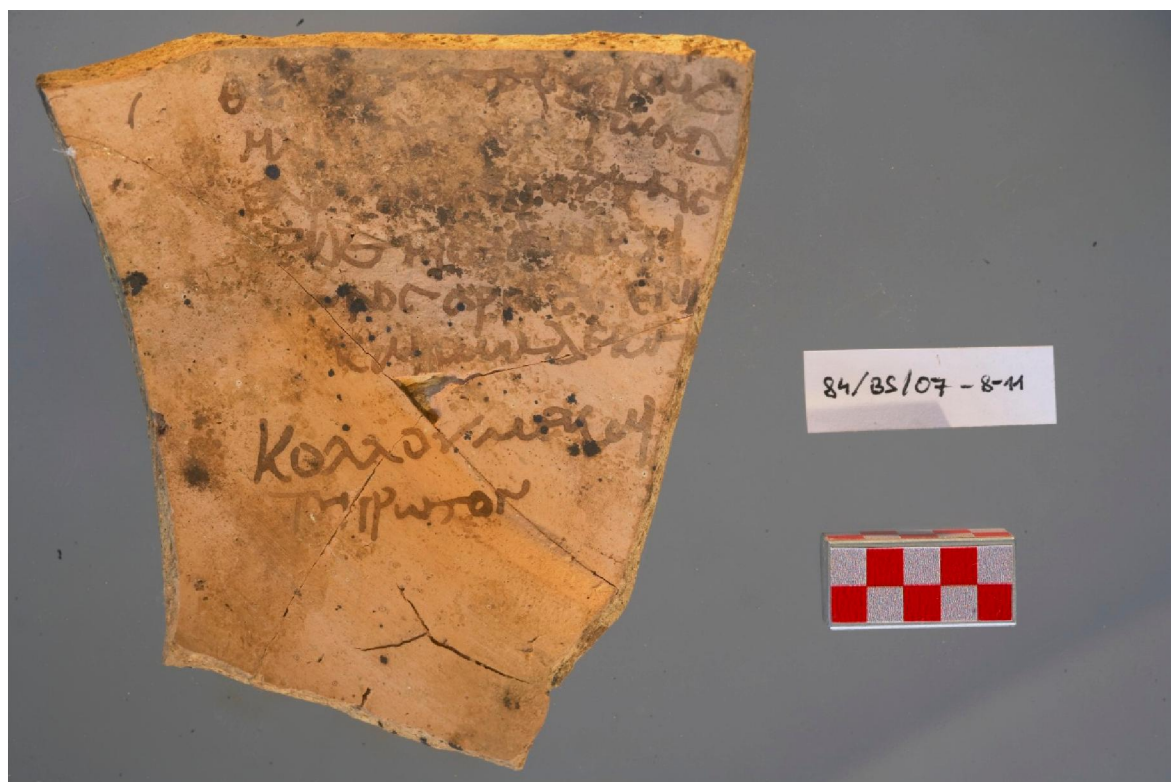


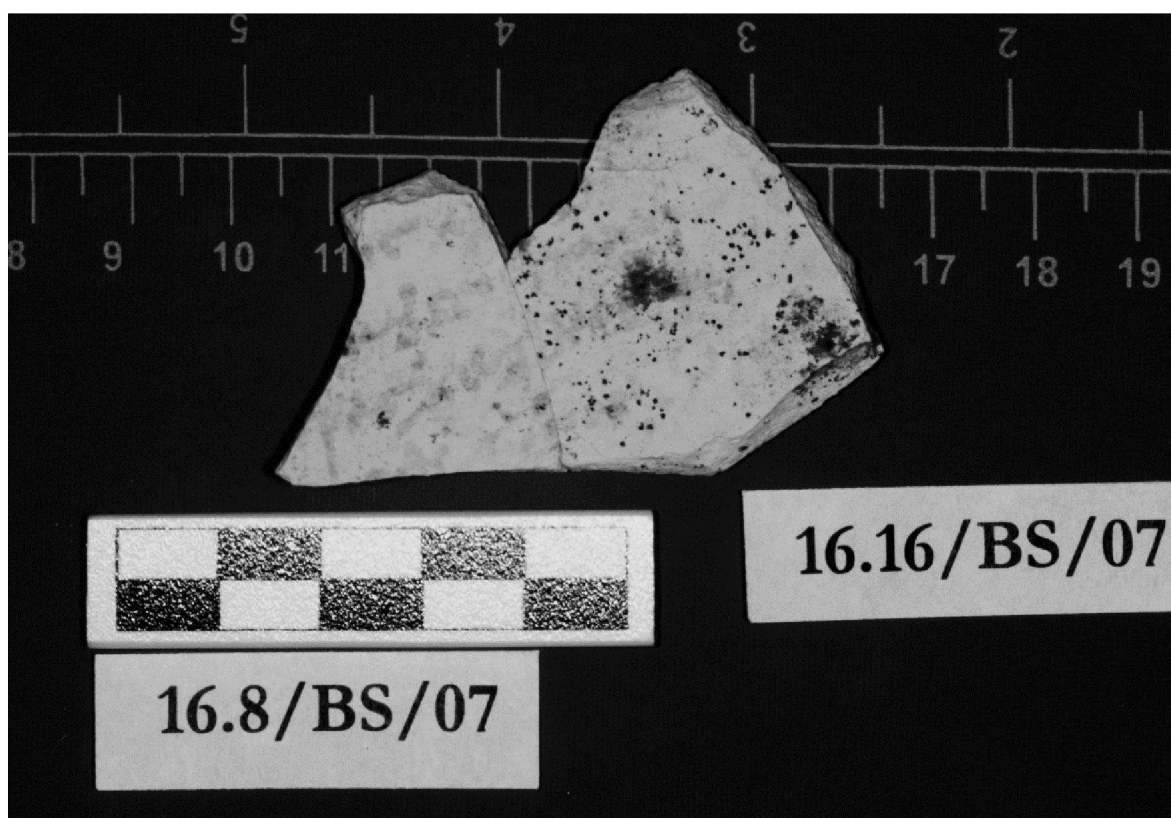




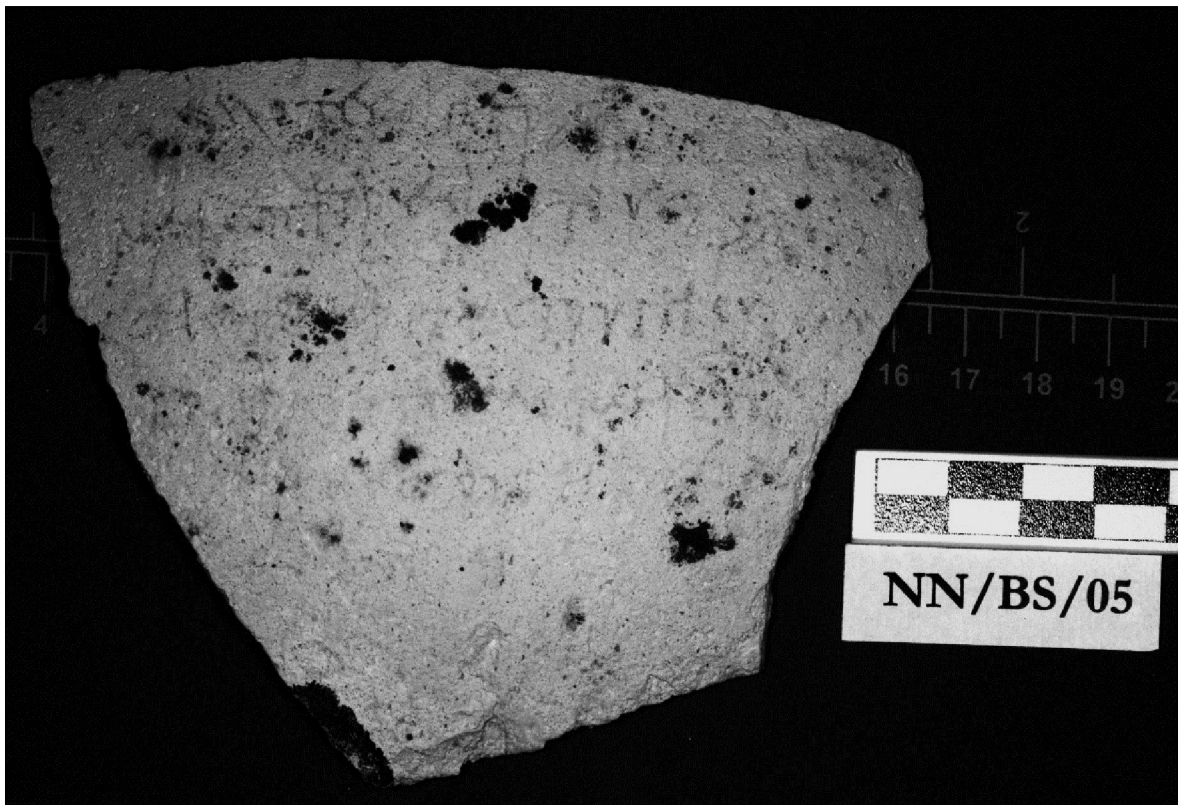
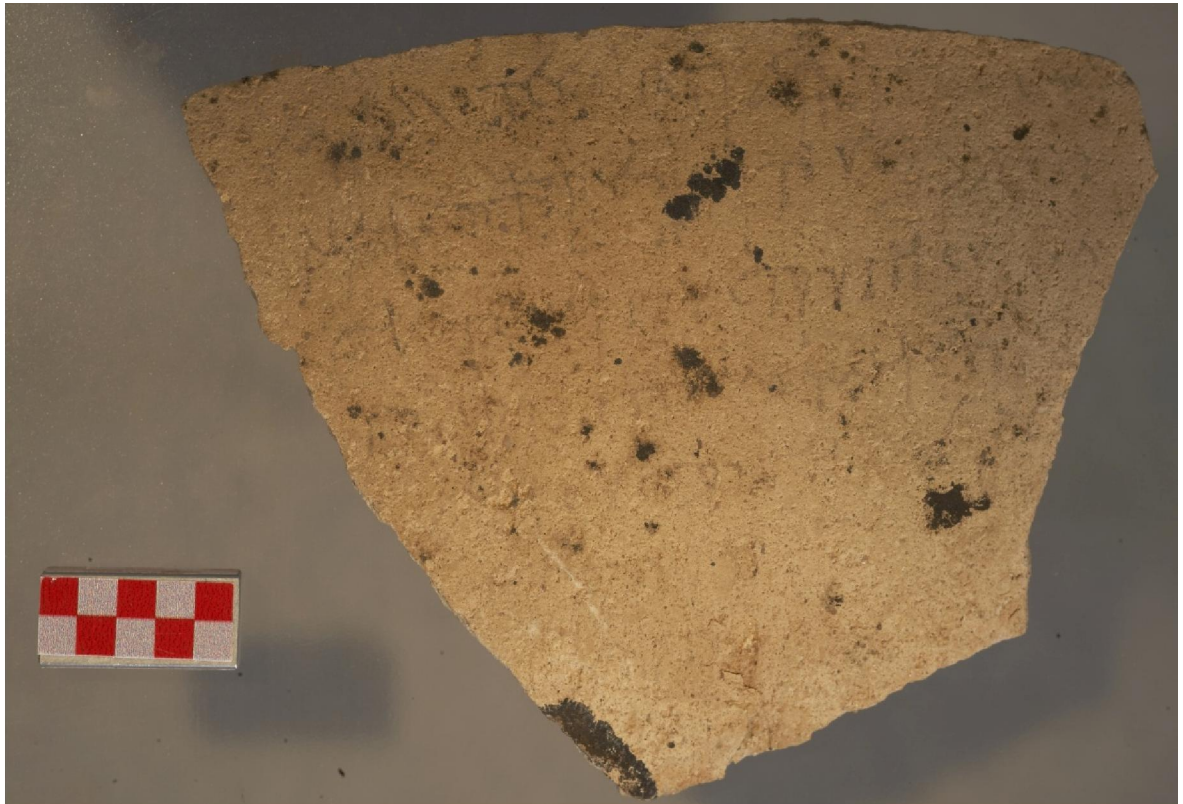


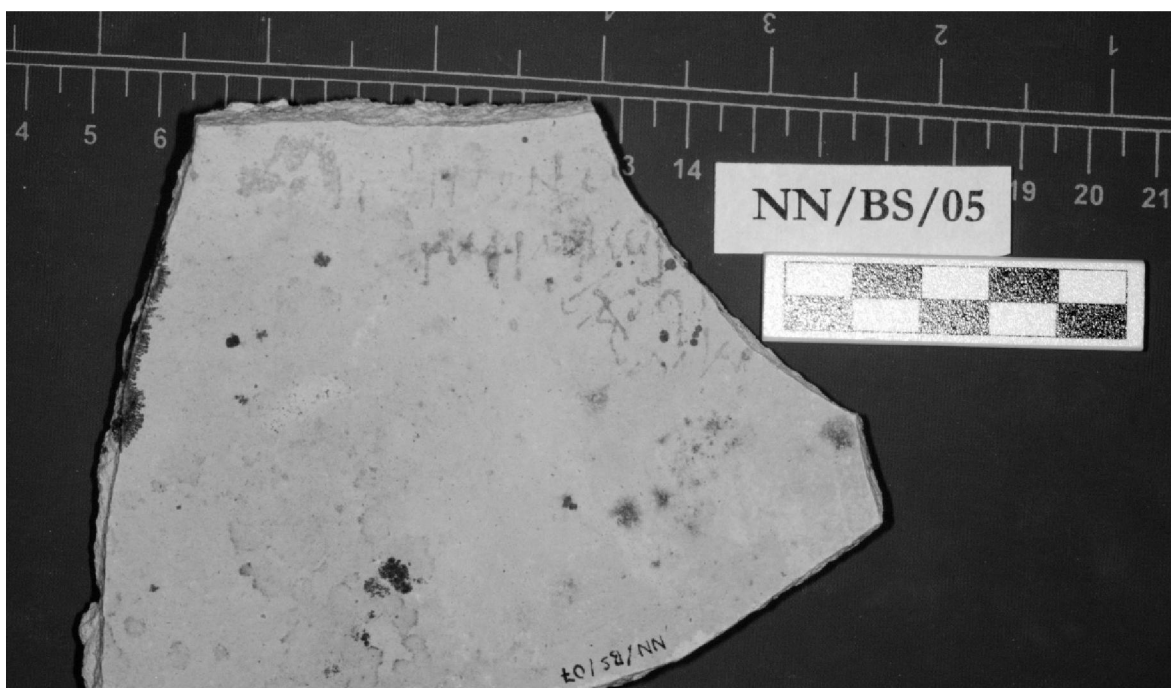




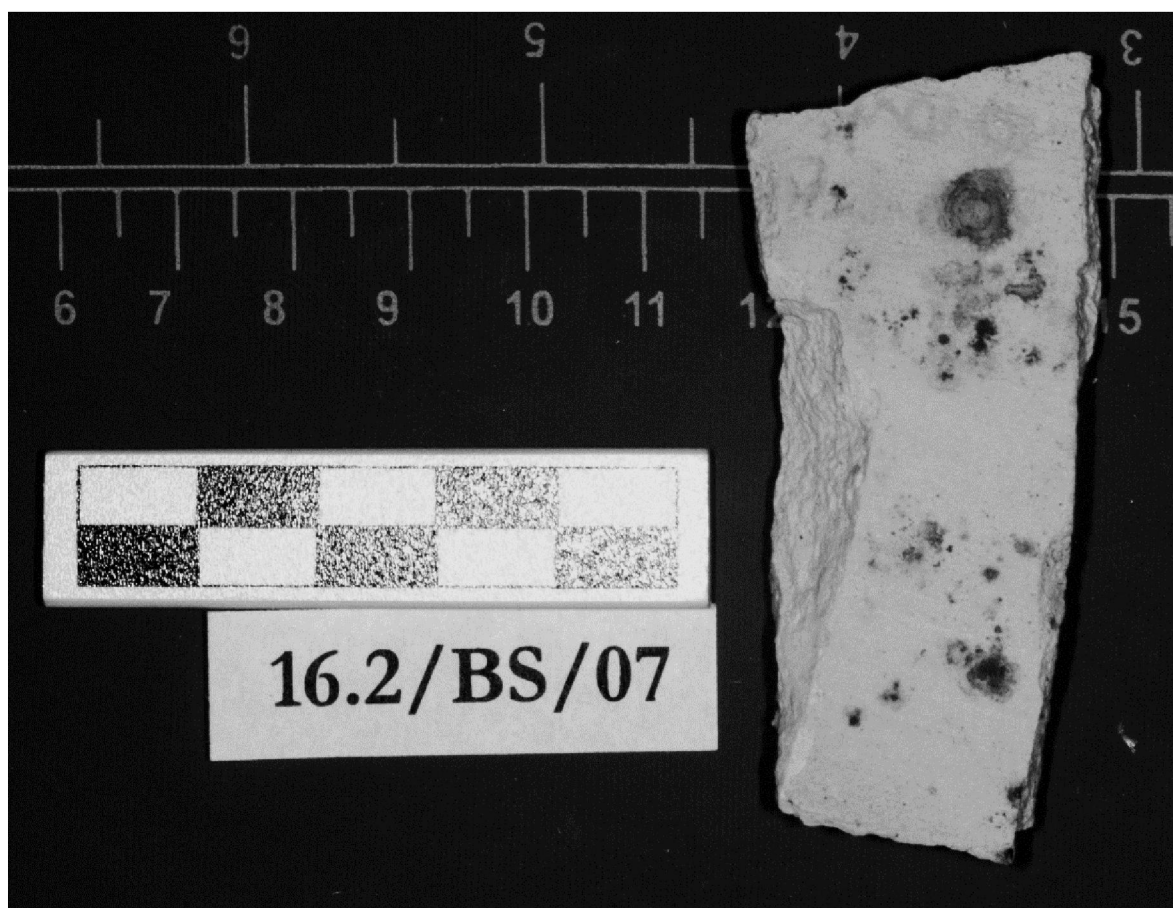












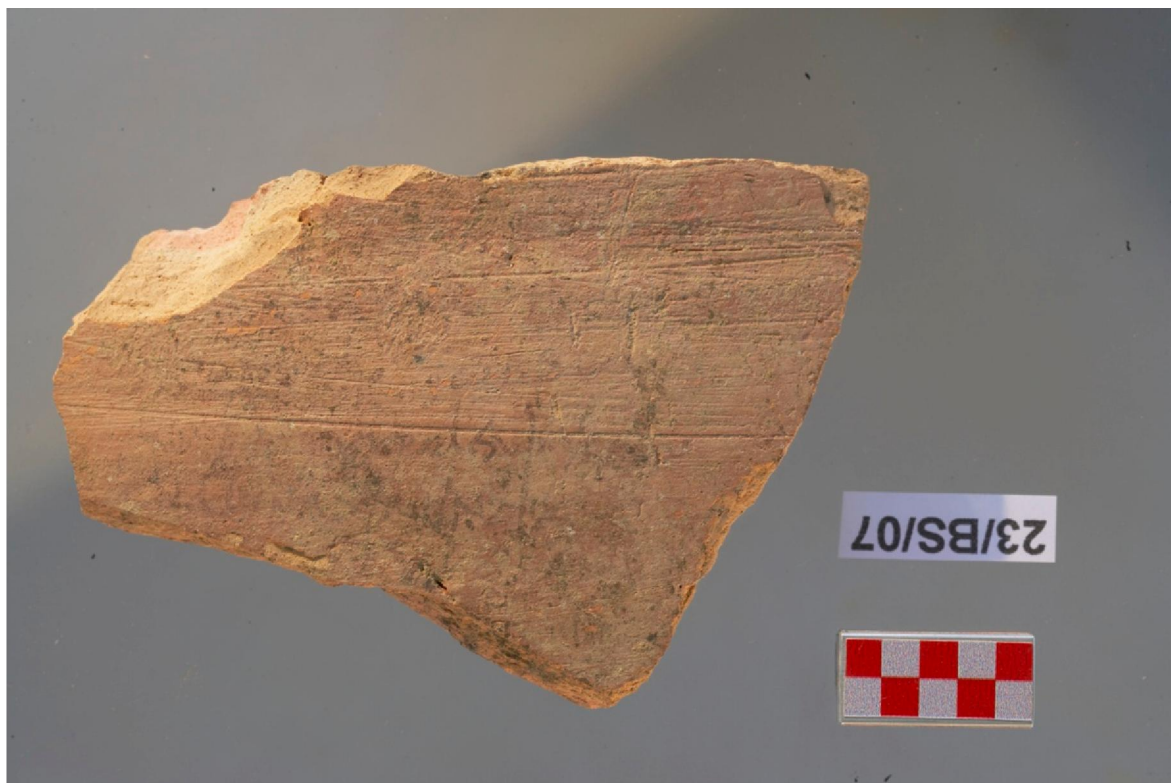


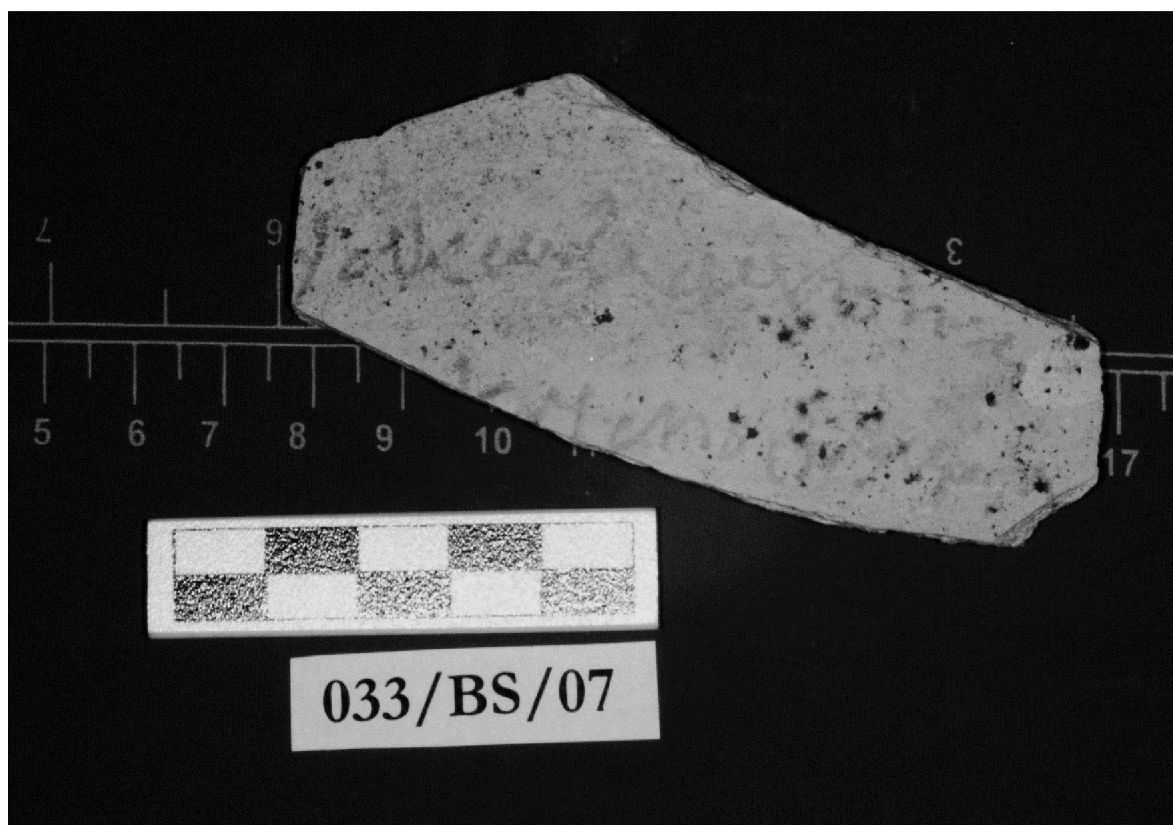






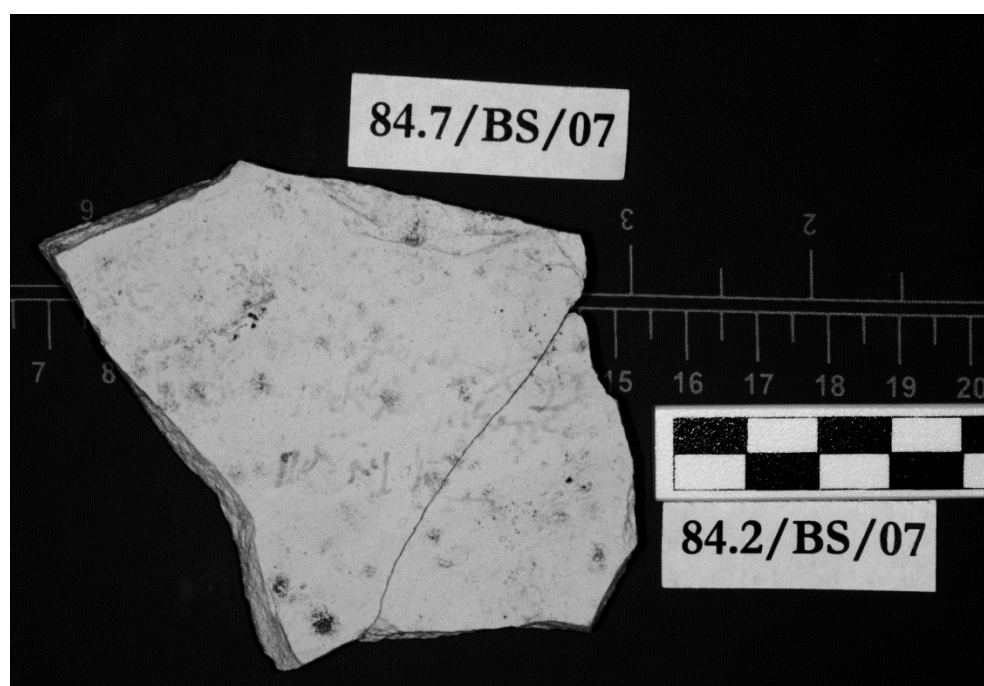
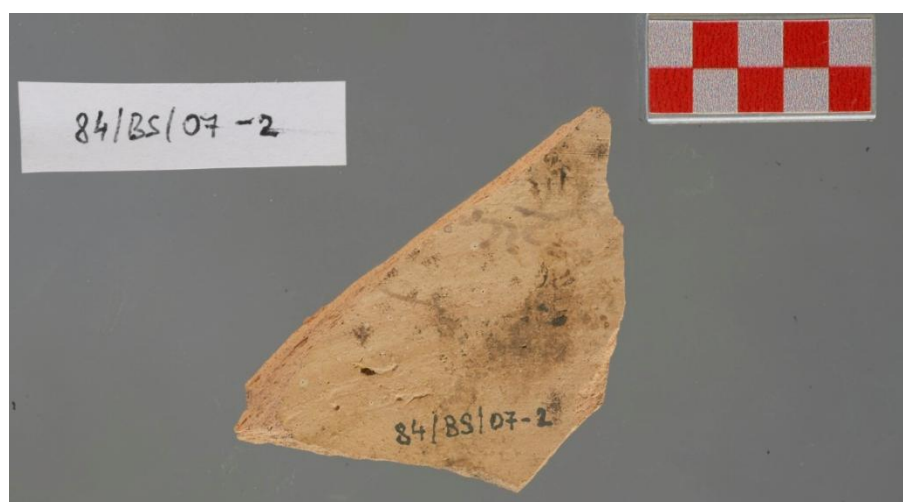




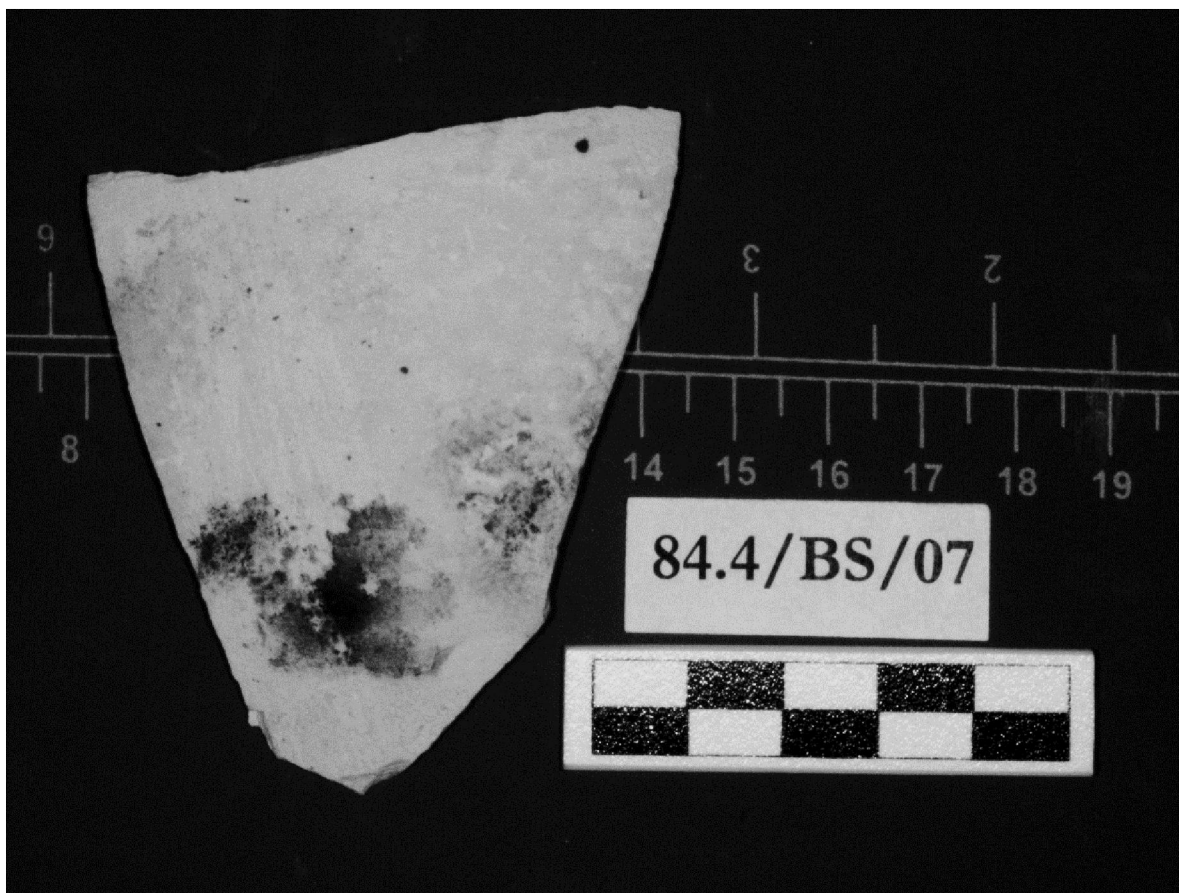








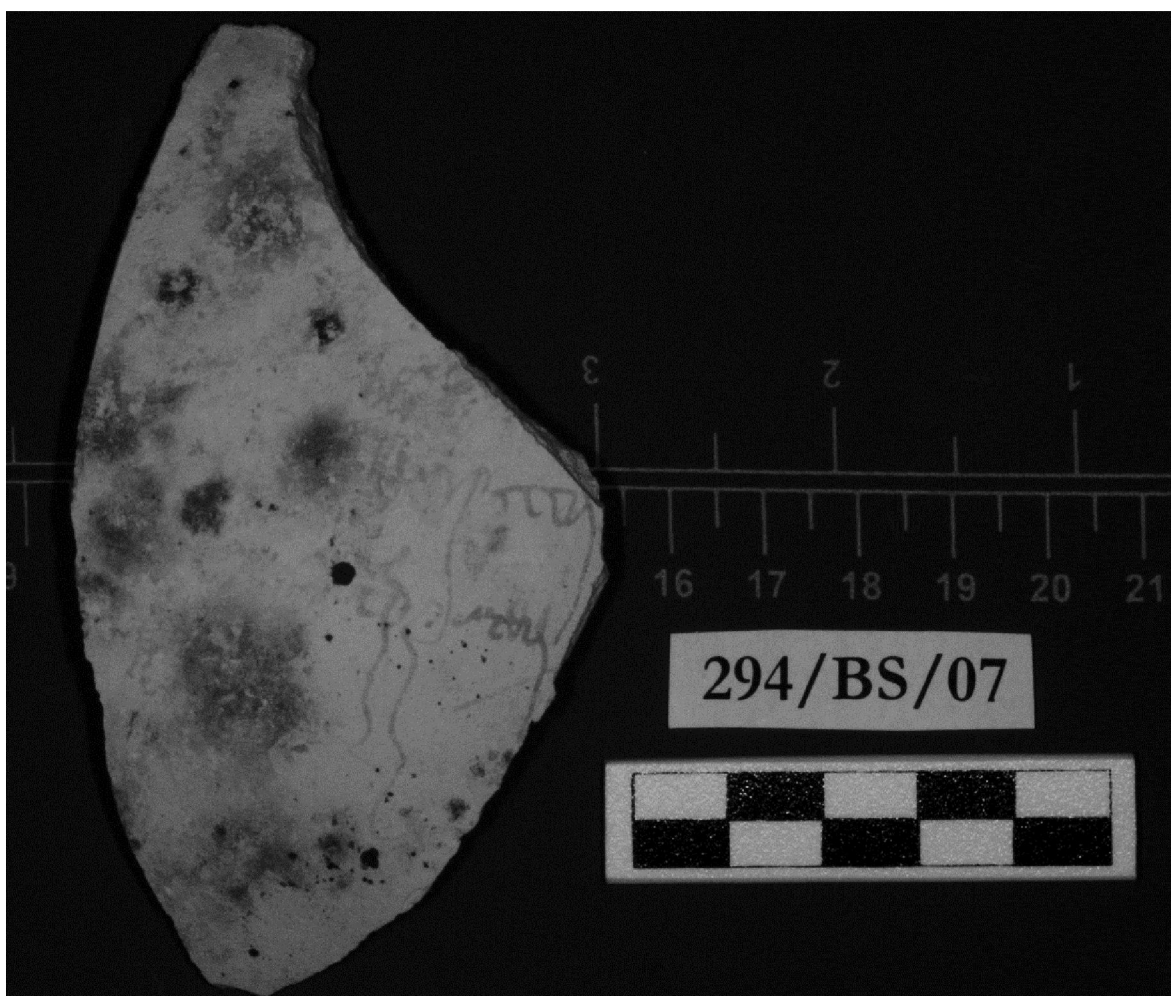




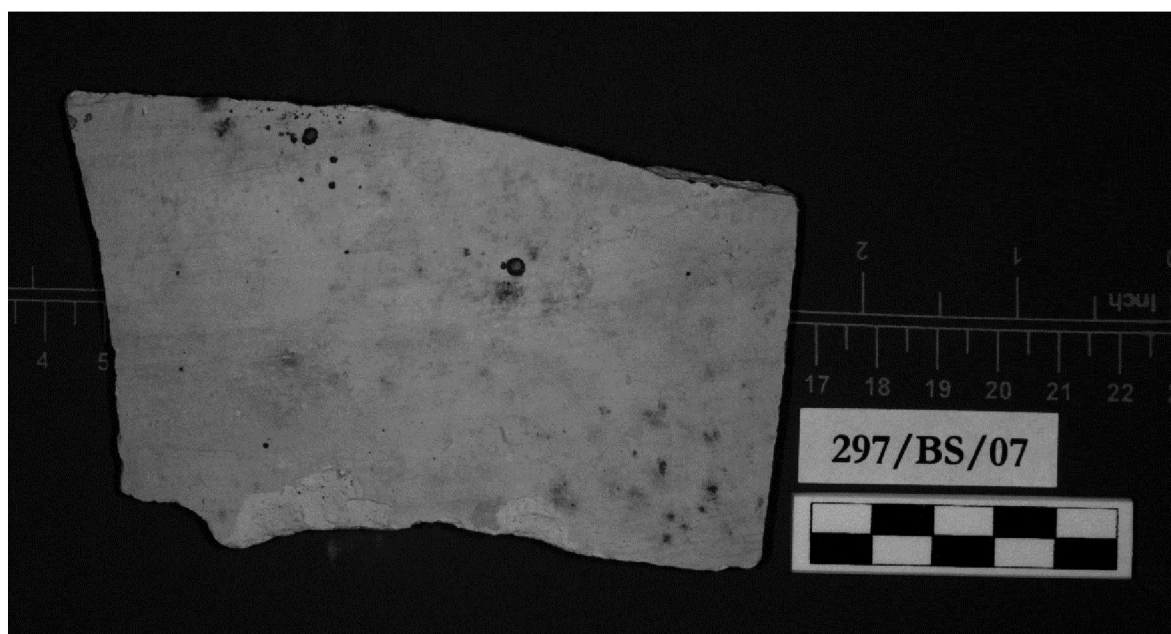


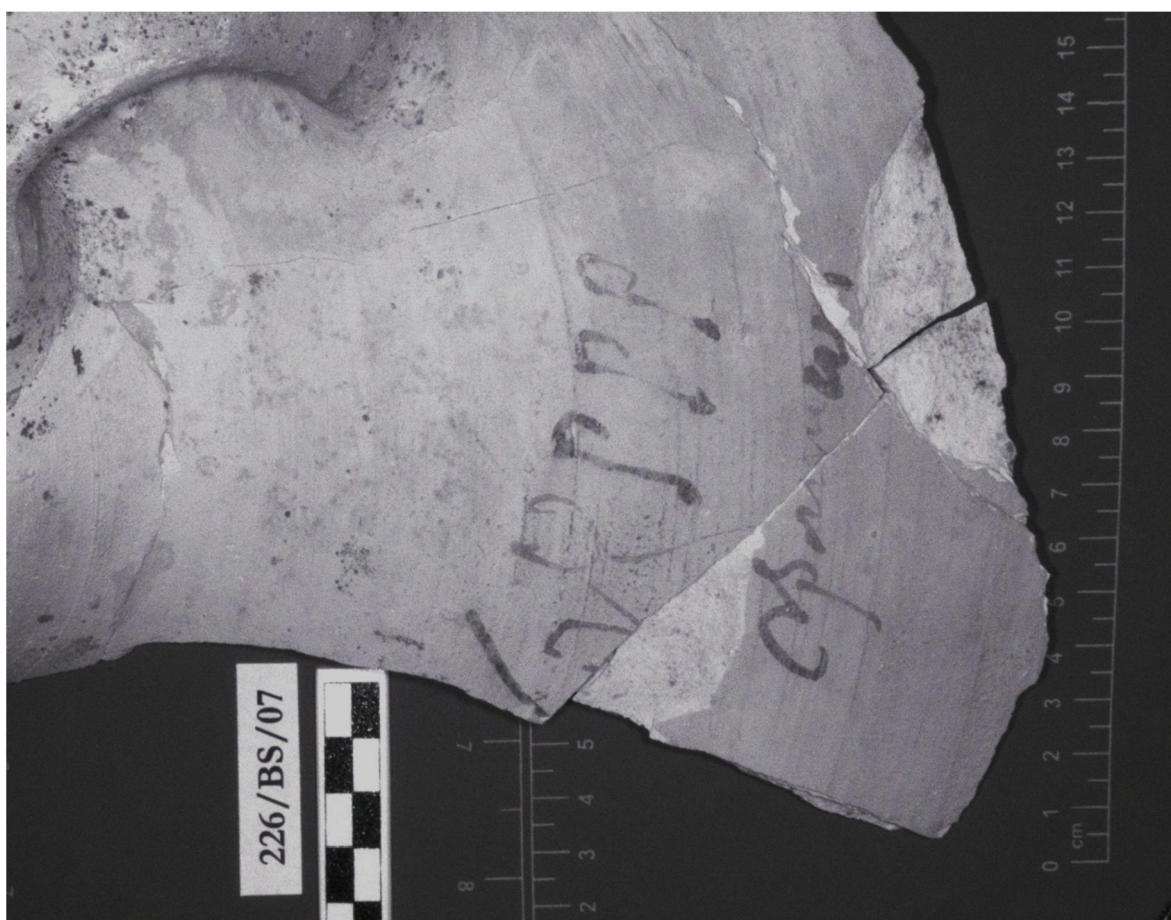




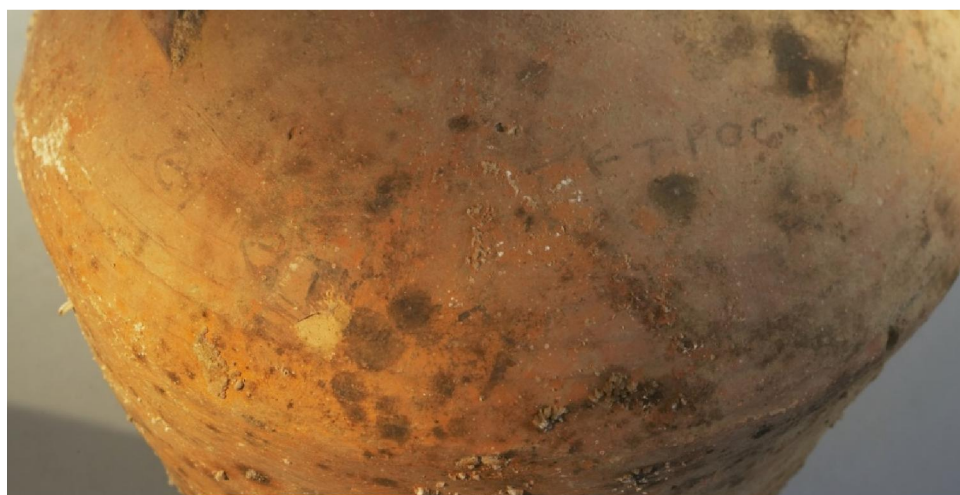




























Left



Right







